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Hindu father can forcibly take custody of minor, says HC

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SPORTS

Rinku brings out his best as KKR claim first win

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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6 drown in Cauvery after dargah visit

MYSURU, 19 APRIL

Six people, including two minors, drowned in the Cauvery River on Sunday, with two others in critical condition, police confirmed. The incident happened near the Arkeshwara Swamy temple close to KR Nagar, when a group visiting for the Hazrat Khadar Lingavalli Urs went for a swim. "Eight persons had entered the river for swimming, of whom six drowned. Two have been rescued and shifted to Mysuru for further treatment, and their conditions are critical," a police officer said. The deceased are identified as Aiman, 13, from Bengaluru, Afeef, 13, from KR Nagar, Yasin, 23, from Bengaluru, Neha, 22, from Bengaluru, Fatima, 30, from Ooty, and Umer, 5, from Mysuru. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced Rs 5 lakh compensation for each bereaved family. *—SALAR NEWS*

Assembly polls: EC removes 11,000 unlawful posts

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

The Election Commission on Sunday said it has identified and acted against over 11,000 "unlawful" social media posts and online content since the announcement of Assembly elections on 15 March across five states. Actions taken include content removal, registration of FIRs, and issuance of clarifications and rebuttals. The EC said measures are aimed at ensuring transparency and voter trust. Following polls in Assam, Kerala and Puducherry on 9 April, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal will vote on 23 April, with West Bengal's second phase on 29 April. The EC also mandated labelling of AI-generated or digitally altered content and said misleading posts will be addressed within three hours of reporting. *—PTI*

SC issues pan-India directions for road safety

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Observing that expressways must not become corridors of peril due to administrative lethargy or infrastructural gaps, the Supreme Court has issued a slew of pan-India guidelines for enhancing road safety, including a ban on parking of heavy vehicles on such roads. A bench of Justices JK Maheshwari and AS Chandurkar pointed out that national highways constitute two percent of India's total road length but account for nearly 30 percent of all road fatalities. *—PTI*

>>>MORE ON PAGE 4

23 killed in massive blast at TN cracker unit

A plume of smoke rises following an explosion at a fireworks unit at Madathupatti village, in Virudhunagar district, Tamil Nadu *—PTI*

100 workers present during blast; blaze hampers rescue

VIRUDHUNAGAR, 19 APRIL

At least 23 people were charred to death and six others sustained grievous injuries in a massive explosion at a private firecracker manufacturing unit near Virudhunagar on Sunday, police said.

The blast occurred at the 'Vanaja' fireworks factory owned by Muthumanickam in Kattanarpatti, under Vachakarapatti police station limits. According to police and fire and rescue services, over 100 workers were reportedly present in the complex at the time of the explosion.

Officials said the blast is suspected to have originated in the front veranda area, where workers were allegedly handling raw materials and carrying out finishing work on firecrackers. The impact was so powerful that at least three rooms were reduced to rubble, while several adjacent structures were completely levelled.

Four of the six injured are in critical condition and are undergoing treatment at the Virudhunagar Government Medical College Hospital. Of the injured, three are women who have suffered up to 60 per cent burn injuries, officials said. Preliminary findings suggest that the unit held a licence from the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation, Nagpur. However, the exact cause of the explosion is yet to be determined. Fire and rescue personnel battled the blaze for several hours, with operations severely hampered as firecrackers continued to explode long after the initial blast. Authorities also fear that more workers may still be trapped under the debris.

The incident is the deadliest industrial accident in the region this year. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Firefighters at the blast site *—PTI*

No more nice guy: Don threatens Iran

WASHINGTON, 19 APRIL

US President Donald Trump has issued a fresh warning to Iran, declaring "No more Mr nice guy" and threatening to strike key infrastructure if Tehran rejects a proposed deal, amid rising tensions in the Strait of Hormuz.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump accused Iran of violating a fragile ceasefire, claiming it "fired bullets" in the Strait in what he called a "total violation" of the agreement. He said some of the fire was directed at a French ship and a UK freighter, adding, "That wasn't nice, was it?"

Trump also said US representatives would travel to Islamabad, Pakistan, for negotiations, pointing to ongoing mediation efforts. He referred to Iran's reported move to close the Strait, claiming a U S blockade had already effectively shut it and alleging Iran was losing around $500 million a day due to disrupted shipping.

He further stated that ships were now moving toward US ports in Texas, Louisiana and Alaska, which he said was "complements of the IRGC," calling it ironic amid tensions over the waterway.

Escalating his rhetoric, Trump warned that if Iran rejects a "fair and reasonable deal," the US would "knock out every single power plant and every single bridge in Iran."The US-Iran conflict, triggered by earlier strikes in February, has seen a fragile ceasefire brokered by Pakistan, though recent talks in Islamabad have failed to deliver a breakthrough, leaving the situation unstable. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 5 & 6

Govt defends delimitation link to women's quota with FAQs

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

The Centre on Sunday released a detailed set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) explaining key aspects of the Women's Reservation framework and related Bills introduced in Parliament.

On 16 April 2026, the government introduced three major Bills in the Lok Sabha: The Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty-First Amendment) Bill, 2026, the Delimitation Bill, 2026, and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

The Centre said the Bills were brought to ensure timely implementation of the 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam' (Women Reservation Act), which provides 33% reservation for women in legislatures. It noted

that linking implementation to the Census and delimitation process could have delayed benefits beyond the 2029 general elections.

Explaining the rationale, the Centre said delimitation would expand Lok Sabha seats from 550 to around 850, reflecting population growth from 54 crore in 1971 to nearly 140 crore today. A uniform 50% increase in seats was proposed to maintain proportional representation across all states.

The government clarified that no changes were made to the Delimitation Commission Act and that ongoing elections, including in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, will not be affected. Any recommendations will require Parliamentary approval. It also said southern states would not be disadvantaged, with their combined seats increasing from 129 to 195. Representation for SCs and STs would remain proportionate, and there would be no separate religious quota within the framework.

The Centre further denied claims that the Bill was linked to delaying a caste census, stating that a time-bound exercise has already begun. *—PTI*

PM's address 'violated' MCC: Left parties writes to CEC

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Left parties have written to Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar alleging that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's national address on Saturday violated the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and sought action against him.

CPI(M) General Secretary MA Baby termed it a "serious violation," accusing the government of misusing Doordarshan to deliver a political speech rather than official communication. CPI Rajya Sabha MP P Sandosh Kumar also said the address, aired while MCC is in force in five states, contained "partisan assertions" and "selective narratives." *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

India, US resume trade talks in Washington today

WASHINGTON, 19 APRIL

About a dozen officers from India will arrive in Washington on April 20 for a three-day discussion with US authorities on the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement (BTA), an official confirmed. The meeting, from 20-22 April will be led by India's chief negotiator Darpan Jain, an additional secretary in the Department of Commerce, with officers from customs and external affairs also participating. Changes in US tariffs, including a 10 per cent tariff imposed from February 24 for 150 days, have led to the need for recalibrating the pact. India has rejected US allegations under Section 301 and called for their termination. The original framework aimed to reduce tariffs on Indian goods, but recent events require agreement adjustments. *—Agencies*

B'luru corps warn absentee Census enumerators of stern action

BENGALURU, 19 APRIL

With many of the Bengaluru corporations' employees being found not reporting for Census duty reportedly citing work load, the five city corporations including Bengaluru North City Corporation (BNCC) have decided to crack the whip in a bid to make their employees fall in line and complete the work.

The corporations have warned the employees staying away from enumeration works as part of the National Census of stern action.

Bengaluru North City Corporation (BNCC) on Saturday issued show-cause notices to 527 employees failing to report for enumeration duty. The corporation has said it would initiate criminal cases under Section 11 of the Census Act and Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita against them. Internal disciplinary action as per service rules will also be taken against them.

Over 23,000 enumerators and around 2,500 supervisors have been deployed for census work in the city.

The GBA claimed that it had assigned each enumerator about 200 houses for enumeration works. However, some enumerators contradicted the GBA claims saying they had been asked to cover 300 houses. A school teacher, 51, from Attiguppe said, "On paper, they say it is only 200 houses, but I am doing at least 350 houses. We have been warned against speaking about itt."

Some of the enumerators were said to bring their relative to help them complete the work load. An enumerator brought along his relative who has just completed her 10th Board examination. "I have medical problems and it is difficult for me to undertake the work on my own. This relative of mine has come on vacation and here she is helping me out in my work." the enumerator said. *—Salar News*

- Bengaluru North City Corporation issued showcause notices to 527 employees failing to report for enumeration duty.

2 Americans with satellite phone detained in J&K

SRINAGAR, 19 APRIL

Two US nationals were detained at Srinagar International Airport on Sunday after a Garmin satellite phone was found in their luggage during routine screening. One was identified as Jeoffery Scot from Montana. Officials said satellite phones are prohibited in India without prior approval, and unauthorised possession can invite action under the Indian Telegraph Act.

In a similar case last May, a US-based ophthalmologist was stopped at Puducherry airport with an Iridium device. Airlines were directed in January 2025 to warn passengers.

Separately, Lashkar-e-Taiba operative Umer Harris, alias 'Khargosh', is believed to have fled to Saudi Arabia using a forged passport. The NIA may take over the probe. *—PTI*

AFTER SUDDEN SURGE

Cops lathicharge migrants at Surat rly stn

SURAT, 19 APRIL

Large crowds gathered at Udhna railway station in Surat on Sunday as thousands of migrant workers attempted to board trains bound for Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, leading to chaos. The situation soon spiralled out of control, forcing police to resort to a lathi charge. Videos on social media showed passengers scrambling to escape, with some jumping over iron railings.

Over 23,000 passengers gathered at the station, with some waiting in 2-km long queues for up to 16 hours in 40°C heat.

The surge was due to the ongoing LPG crisis that has triggered a steady outflow of workers.

Railway official Anubhav Saxena said that by noon, more than 21,000 passengers had departed on six trains, but the sheer volume made crowd management difficult. Despite repeated announcements urging order, the situation deteriorated, prompting stricter action.

The extreme heat and humidity caused several passengers, including women and children, to suffer; at least two passengers reportedly fainted during the wait. *—Agencies*

Two Indian men shot dead in Italy while leaving gurdwara

ROME, 19 APRIL

Two Indian men were shot dead in Covo, in Italy's Bergamo province, late on Friday as they left a warehouse used as a place of worship during Vaisakhi celebrations, local media reported. The attack occurred shortly before midnight outside the Gurdwara Mata Sahib Kaur Ji in the town's industrial area.

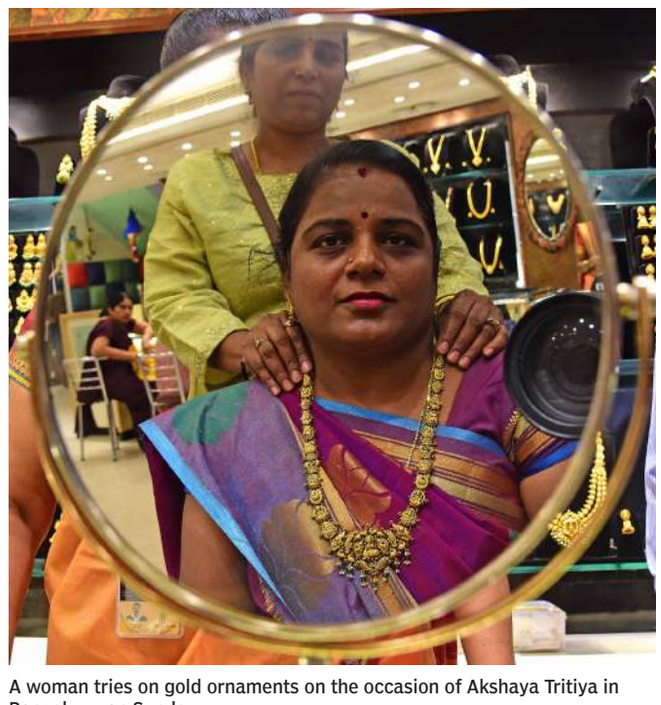
The victims were identified as Raginder Singh, 48, a Covo resident, and Gurmit Singh, 48, from Agnadello. The assailant reportedly approached, opened fire, and fled by car.

Around ten shell casings were recovered. Authorities have not ruled out a "coldly planned execution", with initial findings dismissing a sudden brawl.

An eyewitness said the shooter was an "Indian" who frequented the gurdwara.

A third person was reportedly. *—PTI*

AKSHAYA TRITIYA



A woman tries on gold ornaments on the occasion of Akshaya Tritiya in Bengaluru, on Sunday *—MOHAMMED ASAD*

— FREEPIK

2 held for sexually assaulting minor in Dharmasthala

MANGALURU, 19 APRIL

Two men have been arrested under the POCSO Act in connection with the alleged sexual assault of a minor in Dharmasthala, police said on Sunday. The accused, Sumanth, 28; and Navaneeth, 26l allegedly took a 15-year-old girl to an isolated location on April 16 on the pretext of an outing and later assaulted her. Following a complaint, Dharmasthala police registered a case and launched an investigation. The accused were subsequently apprehended. Police said the minor has been provided support and that further investigation is in progress. —*PTI*

7 hurt in firecracker accident during temple fair

MANGALURU, 19 APRIL

Seven people were injured during a firecracker display at a temple fair in Dakshina Kannada district, police said on Sunday. The incident occurred on the night of 18 April during the annual festivities at the Sri Mahalingeshwara Temple in Puttur town. A traditional fireworks display was being conducted on the temple premises when sparks and burning debris fell on a group of spectators watching from a distance, police said. The injured have been shifted to a nearby hospital, and a complaint has been lodged by one of the injured, Sumanth Shetty, at the Puttur town police station. —*PTI*

Cong supports women, not delimitation: CM

This is democracy, not Hitler's rule: DKS tells BJP, questions timing of amendment

HAVERI/ BENGALURU, 19 APIL

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the Congress supports women's reservation but opposes linking it with delimitation, alleging that such a move would lead to injustice for certain states. He said the Congress' opposition was limited to delimitation.

Speaking to reporters on Sunday, he maintained that the party has consistently backed reservations for women.

"We have never opposed women's reservation. I am making it very, very clear: we are not opposed to women's reservation," he said. "Who brought women's reservation in local bodies? Who introduced the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments? It was done when Rajiv Gandhi was the PM. Did the BJP do it? Or did they even demand it?"

"The Women's Reservation Bill was already passed in 2023 by both Houses—the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha. (But) now they... have linked delimitation to it," he added.

He argued that delimitation could disproportionately benefit northern states in terms of parliamentary seats, citing Uttar Pradesh as an example, and said Karnataka's representation would not increase at the same rate.

On Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks, Siddaramaiah said: "There are elections in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, so they are doing politics".

According to the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, Lok Sabha seats were to be increased to 816 from the current 543 to "operationalise" the women's reservation law before the 2029 parliamentary polls, following a delimitation exercise. However, the bill was defeated in the Lok Sabha.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah during a ceremony at Ranebennur, Haveri on Sunday —*X@SIDDARAMAIAH*

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said that the Centre should have taken the opposition into confidence when tabling the Women's Reservation Amendment Bill.

"This is democracy; this is not a Hitler-style rule. They cannot bring it in the middle of elections and try to alter the entire constituencies," Shivakumar told press in the City. "They have to take everyone into confidence, but they have not done that. That is why the Opposition parties have done a very good job. So, it is a victory of the INDIA alliance." —*PTI*

'Cong cheated women, lied about delimitation'

BENGALURU/ T'PURAM, 19 APRIL

The BJP accused the Congress-led INDIA bloc of "betraying women" by opposing the Constitution Amendments in the Lok Sabha which sought to increase the reservation of women in the legislatures alongside a delimitation exercise.

Addressing a presser in the City on Sunday, BJP MP Anurag Thakur said that Opposition had "historically failed" to support women's empowerment.

"Congress, TMC, DMK, and the Samajwadi Party have strangled women's reservation for the fifth time. Shame on them," he said.

The Himachal Pradesh MP claimed that while the Bill had earlier received support due to political compulsions, the Opposition's "real intent" had been exposed.

BJP MP Anurag Thakur said that South India would benefit from the proposed delimitation, at a presser in the City, on Sunday —*X @IANURAGTHAKUR*

'NO LOSS, ONLY GAIN'

Thakur said the impact of delimitation on Southern states was misconstrued by the Opposition.

"My dear friends, there is no loss—only gain," he said, adding that states such as Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh would see an increase in seats, along with enhanced representation for women, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes.

LONG HISTORY

Tracing the history of the Women's Reservation Bill, Thakur said multiple attempts between 1996 and 2010 had failed due to a lack of sufficient political consensus. He maintained that the current framework, including a census and delimitation, was necessary for implementing the 33 per cent reservation.

Separately, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi said at a press conference in Thiruvananthapuram that the Opposition had a "history of undermining" women's rights, citing the Shah Bano case, where the party, he claimed, brought in legislation to overturn a Supreme Court verdict and deny justice to Muslim women.

"Congress is spreading misinformation on delimitation. The Centre intends to increase the total number of seats by 50 per cent," he said, adding that the representation of southern states would rise from 23.76 per cent to around 24 per cent.

He claimed that the Congress didn't support the Women's Reservation Bill in 1996 when it was first introduced under then prime minister HD Deve Gowda. —*PTI*

SSLC row: Govt files review petition in HC

BENGALURU, 19 APRIL

The Karnataka government has moved the High Court against the single judge order saying that the valuation of the recent SSLC examination must be done as per existing rules, minister Madhu Bangarappa said.

The recent Karnataka HC directive meant awarding marks, and not grades for the third language in the SSLC examination as announced by the government.

The court had earlier this week directed the authorities to conduct the valuation of the recently held SSLC examination as per existing rules, when the notification was issued for the examination for the 2025-26 academic year.

The court issued the directive while hearing a petition filed by three students who appeared for the SSLC exam held between 18 March and 2 April.

The petition was filed after School Education and Literacy Minister Bangarappa's announcement on 27 March that from this academic year, the government would replace the mark system for the third language in the SSLC exam with grading system and that it would not affect a student's results. However, this announcement was made before the third language exam.

"The AG (Advocate General) filed a review petition," Bangarappa said.

Speaking to reporters here on Saturday, he said that earlier, when a PIL was filed with a similar plea the court had imposed a fine on the petitioners. Some Hindi teachers who had filed a petition subsequently withdrew it. — *PTI*

Man files plaint against wife for stealing ₹ 23L gold

UDUPI, 19 APRIL

A man has filed an FIR against his wife, alleging she stole gold ornaments worth over Rs 23 lakh from his bank locker. Despite living separately, the couple resided in the same house. He claimed that his wife took the locker without his permission, with the help of a lock opener, while he was away from home. The accused, Vanita, is alleged to have accessed the bank locker and taken the valuables.

The case involves a couple from Udupi, who, despite sharing the same residence, have been living apart due to marital discord. Kiran Kumar, an electrical engineer residing in Uchila, lodged the complaint accusing his wife of theft of gold worth Rs 23.67 lakh from his bank locker.

According to Kumar, they married in 2016 and have been experiencing strained relations, living separately within the same house. He stated that he had stored important documents and gold in a safe deposit locker at IDBI Bank's Udupi branch, with the key kept in a cupboard.

Kumar alleged that on 10 April, while he was at work, Vanita, aided by a key maker, broke open the cupboard, took the locker key, and accessed the bank locker to remove the gold. Based on the complaint, a case has been registered at Udupi Town Police Station. —*Salar News*

The accident occured after a speeding truck carrying garlic rammed into a car, a bus and three bikes before overturning —*SALAR*

4 dead in Hosapete highway pile-up

VIJAYANAGARA, 19 APRIL

At least four people were killed in a pile-up involving a bus, a garlic-laden lorry, a car, and multiple two-wheelers near Danapur in Hosapete taluk of Vijayanagara district on Sunday morning, police said. At least twenty others were injured.

Eyewitnesses said that a Haryana-registered lorry carrying garlic rammed into a car, a government bus, and three bikes before overturning by the roadside.

The lorry fell onto the car and dragged it for nearly 100 metres after the impact.

Preliminary inquiry suggests the lory driver was heading towards Chitradurga and was driving at high speed.

Rescue operations were ongoing to clear the overturned vehicle. The injured have been shifted to government hospitals in Hosapete and Koppal for treatment. Vehicular movement on National Highway 50 was severely affected, with traffic piling up for 3kms on both sides. A case is registered at Mariammanahalli Police Station. —*Salar News*

Cong is illiterate: Surya on T'gana bifurcation row

BENGALURU/ HYDERABAD, 19 APRIL

Reacting to criticism over his remarks on the bifurcation of Telangana, Karnataka BJP MP Tejasvi Surya said on Sunday that "I feel the Congress party is a party of illiterates. They should go and listen to what I have said and try to understand it... I do not want to justify or glorify their ignorance with a response."

Congress workers in Telangana had protested Surya's remarks earlier, where he compared the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh to the 1947 Partition of India—a remark they claim disparaged the 60-year-old statehood movement, and demanded an apology.

Surya on Thursday said his statement in Parliament during the debate on the Women's Reservation Amendment Bill was being "mischievously twisted". Surya slammed the way the then UPA government bifurcated undivided Andhra Pradesh in 2014. —*Agencies*

IN AMBEDKAR'S MEMORY

AICC secretary Mansoor Ali Khan, Home Minister G Parameshwara, Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao, KPCC SC Wing President Dharmasena, and others distributed around 5,000 food kits to underprivileged families for 135th birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar, at Sunrise Circle, Gandhinagar, on Sunday —*SALAR*

Raichur board collapse victims face neurosurgery

RAICHUR, 19 APRIL

Four injured people, including a teenager who lost both legs and a three-year-old, remain under intensive treatment after a cement name board collapsed during a folk theatre event in Bail Marchad village of Manvi taluk in Raichur district.

Doctors said the victims are under neurosurgery and orthopaedic care, with conditions ranging from stable to critical. A three-year-old child with a head injury is being evaluated for suspected skull fractures and cerebral oedema. Vishalakshi, 22, has an acute subdural haematoma and is under conservative management. Lakshmi, 17, who lost both legs, remains in critical condition, while Basamma, 40, suffered fractures to the tibia and fibula after losing one leg.

The incident occurred around 11.30pm on Friday during a Bayalata performance when the heavy board fixed to the community hall façade collapsed onto spectators, killing two children on the spot. MLA Basanagouda Daddal said structural safety audits of old buildings would be reviewed. —*Salar News*

LICENCE SUSPENDED

Mulbagal A2B hotel fined Rs 1L for flouting food safety norms

KOLAR, 19 APRIL

In a stern action against a prominent hotel chain, the district administration in Kolar has slapped a fine of Rs 99,999 on Adyar Ananda Bhavan hotel, popularly known as A2B, in Mulbagal, for violating food safety norms.

The action against the A2B hotel came following repeated violation of food safety regulations, and in the wake of a surprise inspection at its premises located on National Highway-75 in Mulbagal on 7 April, officials said.

During the inspection, officials found approximately 15 litres of expired curd and 3 litres of expired milk at the hotel. The authorities temporarily suspended the hotel's license and issued a notice directing them to comply with food safety norms.

Authorities found 48 litres of expired ghee, milk and curd —*SALAR*

However, the A2B hotel management allegedly failed to take suitable steps to implement food safety measures. In a follow-up inspection on 16 April the authorities found the hotel continued to operate despite the suspension order.

Acting on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Dr MR Ravi, a joint raid was conducted again on 18 April against the hotel by Mulbagal Tahsildar, food safety officials, the Taluk Panchayat Executive Officer, and the Mulbagal rural police team.

Around 30 litres of expired ghee were seized.

The DC warned that inspections will be intensify in the coming days. —*Salar News*

LPG WOES CONTINUE

Autorickshaws line up to fill LPG gas at a bunk on Deve Gowda Road, RT Nagar, in Bengaluru on Sunday. The Iran war has severely impacted their livelihoods —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

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QUOTE of THE DAY

Modi ji mentioned Congress 59 times and women barely a few times. That tells the country everything about his priorities

—MALLIKARJUN KHARGE,
Congress President

‘TMC betrayed women, will lose in WB polls’

Modi promises women Rs 1L to build homes

BANKURA, 19 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday accused the Trinamool Congress of “betraying” women by preventing the passage of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 in Parliament.

Addressing an election rally in Bankura district, Modi attempted to flip what was widely seen as a setback for the BJP into an emotive campaign issue in West Bengal, where women voters and beneficiaries of welfare schemes have emerged as the single most decisive electoral constituency.

Modi announced assistance of up to Rs 1.5 lakh for women under the PM Awas Yojana and assistance of Rs 21,000 for pregnant women, women would be given Rs 5,000 on the birth of a child, and girl children would get Rs 50,000 for education.

Modi alleged that the ruling party betrayed the women because they are challenging TMC’s ‘mahajungleraj’ (lawlessness) in West Bengal.

The bill failed to clear the Lok Sabha on Friday after falling short of the required two-thirds majority

Prime Minister Narendra Modi tries streetfood after public meetings in Jhargram in West Bengal on Sunday—*PTI*

BJP is attempting to win away a section of the TMC’s formidable women vote.

Modi said BJP sought tribal empowerment in the Junglemahal region, while accusing the TMC and the Congress of insulting President Droupadi Murmu. TMC ignored the Kurmi community’s grievances while selectively offering benefits to its “vote bank,” he said.

Addressing a rally in Purulia, Modi accuses TMC of changing West Bengal’s language and culture through infiltration.

He accused the TMC government of humiliating tribal languages and identity while pursuing “appeasement politics”.

Modi said the state had witnessed “dangerous” levels of joblessness during the TMC’s 15-year rule and referred to the school jobs scam. —*PTI*

‘Modi misusing govt machinery for polls’

Didi says BJP used women to push delimitation

TARAKESWAR, 19 APRIL

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of “misusing” government machinery for political campaigns.

Addressing a poll rally in Hooghly district’s Tarakeswar, Banerjee alleged that Modi indulged in “illegal campaign” for the BJP through his address to the nation regarding the women’s quota bill.

In an address to the nation on Saturday, a day after the women’s reservation was defeated in the Lok Sabha, Modi warned the Congress and its allies that the women of India will severely punish them for “the sin of foeticide”.

The TMC chief said why the government did not implement the women’s reservation bill that was passed in September 2023.

Banerjee claimed that the BJP-led government was plotting to push through the delimitation exercise by “using women as a shield”.

Addressing a poll rally at Kalna in Purba Bardhaman district, Banerjee alleged that the BJP, if it comes to power,

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee takes part in a roadshow in Howrah in West Bengal on Sunday—*PTI*

will take away all the welfare benefits introduced by the TMC government, such as ‘Lakshmir Bhandar’, ‘Joy Johar’ for the Adivasis or ‘Oikyoshree’ for the minorities.

One crore girls in the state get benefits under the Kanyashree programme, she said.

Accusing the BJP of using central agencies to intimidate TMC leaders, Banerjee threatened legal action.

Banerjee alleged that migrant workers from West Bengal face atrocities in BJP-ruled states and urged them to get work in the state under the 100-day job guarantee scheme. She tried to appease Muslim voters by referring to the violence during anti-Waqf Amendment Act protests in Murshidabad —*PTI*

Nat’l Herald: HC to hear plea against Sonia, Rahul

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

The Delhi High Court will hear a plea by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday regarding the National Herald money-laundering case. The petition challenges a trial court’s order that refused to take cognisance of the agency’s chargesheet against Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Sam Pitroda, Suman Dubey, and the late Motilal Vora and Oscar Fernandes. —*PTI*

Andhra Guv, CM wish DyCM Pawan a speedy recovery

AMRAVATI, 19 APRIL

Andhra Pradesh Governor S Abdul Nazeer and Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu have wished a speedy recovery to Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan following his surgery. Kalyan underwent a surgical procedure on Saturday following a serious illness’ while discussing with officials on Friday.The actor-politician has been unwell for the past few months.Doctors have advised the Janasena chief to take rest for about 10 days before resuming his duties. “May Almighty bestow the strength on him for his fast recovery and good health,” said Nazeer on X. Naidu said he was confident that Kalyan would regain strength. —*PTI*

Revanth meets Guv for Azharuddin’s MLC clearance

HYDERABAD, 19 APRIL

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on Sunday paid a courtesy visit to State Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla to discuss issues related to education, official sources said. Reddy’s visit to Lok Bhavan comes amid a pending issue: the Governor has yet to clear the state’s nomination of former cricketer and minister Mohammad Azharuddin as an MLC. Sworn in on 31 October 2025, he must be elected to the legislature within six months, by 30 April 2026. Though the government is tight-lipped on the Azharuddin issue, the nominations also figured in the meeting. —*PTI*

—SCREENGRAB

Bihu goes global: Himanta on space performance

GUWAHATI, 19 APRIL

A video of an American astronaut performing Bihu aboard the International Space Station (ISS) has drawn applause from Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma as the state celebrates Rongali Bihu. The video recently went viral on social media, in which Mike Fincke, who is married to an Assamese woman, Renita Saikia, is seen performing the vibrant folk dance performed for the Assamese New Year, with a traditional ‘gamosa’ (scarf) around his neck and a Bihu song playing in the background. Sharing the video on X, Sarma wrote: “Bihu in an International Space Station. Kudos to astronaut Mike Fincke for this special gesture to Assam’s culture. It’s wonderful to see Bihu going global during BihuBinandia.” —*PTI*

EC ADDS 7 LAKH NEW VOTERS IN WEST BENGAL

KOLKATA, 19 APRIL

Around seven lakh new voters have been added to the West Bengal electoral rolls ahead of the Assembly polls, with the Election Commission (EC) yet to disclose the age or gender break-up of this additional electorate, officials said.

Around 3.22 lakh of these new electors will vote in the first phase, while the remaining nearly 3.88 lakh voters

will exercise their franchise in the second phase, a senior official of the poll body said on Saturday.

The commission, however, has not specified how many among these new entrants are first-time voters, who have just turned 18, nor has it given a detailed gender break up of these voters.

The commission has also not disclosed the number of Form-6 applications received for inclusion in the rolls or how many of them were rejected.

"The aggregate figures have been released in line with norms," EC said. —*PTI*

ED RAIDS KOLKATA TOP COP, TRADER IN FRAUD CASE

KOLKATA, 19 APRIL

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Sunday conducted raids at the premises of Kolkata Police Deputy Commissioner Shantanu Sinha Biswas as part of a probe in a money laundering case in the poll bound West Bengal.

The raids against Biswas and another person were in connection with a money laundering probe against an

alleged criminal and his syndicate linked to him, officials said.

Two premises of Biswas, including his residence in Ballygunge and location of a man named Joy Kamdar, Managing Director of a company named Sun Enterprise, have been raided under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The action is linked to a money laundering case against an alleged local criminal named Biswajit Podder who is booked in many cases on charges of attempted murder and extortion. —*PTI*

Delimitation aimed at dividing votes: Kharge

HOSIUR, 19 APRIL

AICC chief **Mallikarjun Kharge** on Sunday said that the Opposition opposed the proposed delimitation exercise as it was aimed at "dividing votes and ruling".

He asserted that it was being wrongly projected as a women's reservation measure for political gain. Also, it was not empowering women, he added.

Addressing a poll rally in Hosur near the Karnataka border, which has a sizeable Kannada-and Tamil-speaking population, Kharge said the move sought to arbitrarily alter constituencies to weaken Opposition parties, and credited the people of Tamil Nadu, its MPs and Chief Minister MK Stalin for backing efforts to stall it.

He said Stalin carried forward the legacy of leaders like Periyar EV Ramasamy, CN Annadurai and M Karunanidhi rooted in dignity, rational thought and equality.

He said that both Dravidian

and Congress traditions rejected blind faith.

Kharge questioned Modi on the delay in implementing the women's reservation law passed in 2023 and accused him of pursuing a "divisive social order. He also reiterated support for one-third reservation for women.

He said delimitation would involve "arbitrarily shifting regions." This exercise was intended to fragment Opposition vote bases, he alleged.

Kharge noted that the DMK government, with Congress support, had ensured welfare schemes reached the poor and implemented guarantees effectively, and urged voters to choose their alliance. —*PTI*

Missing Assam polling official’s nude body found

DIPHU, 19 APRIL

The nude and decomposed body of a missing polling official was found in a remote hilly area in Assam's Karbi Anglong district, officials said on Sunday.

The body of Cornelius Kindu was found in the Rongwongwey area on Saturday by locals, who alerted the authorities.

Kindu, the third officer at number 19 Sarpo Kathar LP School polling station, was reported missing from 9 April. He had left saying that he was unwell while voting for the Assembly elections was underway.

The officials said the cause of death is yet to be ascertained.

A search was launched by the authorities after Kindu failed to reach his Diphu residence, but it yielded no results. Drones were also used to trace the polling official in the hilly and thickly forested terrain.

Investigations are underway to find out the cause of the death. — *PTI*

TN CM Stalin releases manifesto for Chennai

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin shows the DMK party manifesto in Chennai on Sunday—*PTI*

CHENNAI, 19 APRIL

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Sunday unveiled the DMK’s ‘Chennai Super-6’, a Chennai-specific manifesto for the Assembly polls.

Elections to 234 Assembly seats in this state will be held on 23 April.

Stalin released the manifesto at the DMK headquarters, ‘Anna Arivalayam’, and its first copy was received by party organisation secretary RS Bharathi.

The six-point document promises upgraded amenities, 1,000 new mini-buses, and AI-enabled transport management to reduce congestion and cut travel time.

Stormwater drains, key road projects, and world-class amenities on roads, such as avenue trees, were among the assurances made by the ruling party.

Notably, to tackle the stray dog menace, the party has assured that it will triple the number of veterinary doctors and field staff.

A special centre for AI, animation, visual effects, gaming, and immersive technologies, along with a global talent gateway, also forms part of the promises made by the ruling party with the hope to retain power in the state. —*PTI*

Cong & DMK betrayed women, says Shah

Union Home Minister Amit Shah during a roadshow in Mylapore constituency in Chennai on Sunday—*PTI*

ERODE, 19 APRIL

Union Home Minister Amit Shah lashed out at the Congress and the DMK on Sunday for voting against the Women's Reservation Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha, accusing them of "betraying" women from getting the quota in Parliament and Assemblies.

Addressing a roadshow here for BJP’s Modakurichi candidate for the 23 April Assembly polls, Kirthika Shivkumar, he said the NDA would form the government under the leadership of AIADMK chief Edappadi K Palaniswami after polls.

"The Congress and the DMK have deprived our sisters and mothers across the country of reservation in Parliament and Assemblies. There was a chance for a 50 per cent LS seat increase in TN. But they conspired to reduce TN’s seats by insisting on their increase after the 2026 census," he said.

"I want to assure the people of Tamil Nadu that we will not allow this conspiracy," Shah said. He also hit out at the ruling DMK's first family’s "dynastic politics."

CENTRE WILL BRING BILL

Meanwhile, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh slammed the Congress and the DMK for defeating the bill on women's reservation in Parliament but said the Centre is determined to implement it.

“I would like to assure, that we will certainly give 33 per cent reservation for women," he said. — *PTI*

TVK backs independent candidate

CHENNAI, 19 APRIL

Ahead of the April 23 Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, actor-turned-politician Vijay’s TVK has officially extended its support to an independent candidate in the high-profile Edappadi constituency.

In a statement posted on social media platform X on Sunday, the TVK chief urged voters in the Salem district constituency to back K Premakumar, a former administrator of the actor’s fan club. Premakumar, contesting under the "television box" symbol, is being positioned as the TVK’s "candidate in spirit".

Vijay called on supporters to ensure a victory as a "right lesson" to those who allegedly tried to suppress the party’s symbol through "crooked means".

The nomination of TVK’s candidate was rejected by Election Commission. — *PTI*

ASKS EC TO INCLUDE NAMES

End SIR: Intellectuals, activists

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

A group of intellectuals, lawyers, students and social activists have demanded the immediate termination of the Special Intensive Review (SIR) of the electoral rolls, which they said is “against citizens’ rights”,

These individuals also called for continuation of the old electoral rolls and elections to be conducted on that basis.

The demand was placed at a seminar organised by the human rights organisation ‘Janhastakshep’ at the Press Club of India in New Delhi on Saturday, according to a press release.

Those who attended the seminar include former chief election commissioner SY Quraishi, senior advocate Prashant Bhushan, former professor of Delhi University Badri Raina, Press Club of India president Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty and several others.

“The SIR process... must be immediately halted.

The SIR exercsise has caused panic among citizens of various states —*ANI*

Alternatively, appeals filed by those whose names have been deleted should be decided promptly, allowing them to vote, or the 2025 updated electoral rolls should be used to ensure voting rights for all,” a unanimously passed resolution said. Otherwise, it said, the upcoming Assembly elections to be held in two phases in West Bengal on 23 and 29 April will be rendered absolutely meaningless.

“The SIR process must be clearly redefined and the responsibility of the Election Commission is to include names in voter rolls; it cannot demand or verify citizenship documents. Determination of citizenship is the responsibility of the Ministry of Home Affairs,” it said.

The convenor was Vikas Bajpei from the JNU and co-convener was journalist Anil Dubey. —*PTI*

Offensive material found at Delhi temple gate, 1 held

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Delhi Police have detained a man for allegedly placing objectionable material at a temple gate in northeast Delhi's Dayalpur area. An official confirmed the arrest on Sunday, following a police inquiry launched after receiving information on 15 April. A police team reached the scene and promptly registered an FIR. The identity of the accused has not been disclosed. Authorities stated that the situation remained under control and measures were taken to uphold law and order. The investigation continues to determine the motive and whether others were involved in the incident, police added. *—PTI*

—PTI

Chh'garh Vedanta power plant blast toll rises to 24

RAIPUR, 19 APRIL

The death toll from the Vedanta power plant explosion in Chhattisgarh's Sakti district has increased to 24. One more worker succumbed to injuries on Sunday, raising the number of fatalities. The incident occurred on 14 April in a high-pressure steam tube at Vedanta Ltd's plant, causing severe burns to several workers. Eleven others remain hospitalised, with two in critical condition. The deceased include workers from West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh. Police registered an FIR under negligence-related sections, with investigations indicating excessive fuel accumulation in the pipelines caused the explosion *—PTI*

—INSTAGRAM

Actor Maniyanpilla Raju cleared of drunk driving

T'PURAM, 19 APRIL

Actor Maniyanpilla Raju has been cleared of drunken driving allegations following blood tests. The incident occurred on 5 February, when Raju's car hit a two-wheeler and left the scene without helping the injured. Blood samples were collected on 6 February and tested last week, showing no alcohol influence. Raju was arrested immediately after the accident and later granted bail. Following the results, a chargesheet will be filed soon. Raju stated he panicked and returned home. The case involves sections under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Motor Vehicles Act for negligence and endangering lives. *—PTI*

—SCREENGRAB

Man climbs on power lines, train services disrupted

MUMBAI, 19 APRIL

A mentally challenged man caused chaos at Manmad railway station in Maharashtra's Nashik district by climbing on to overhead wires, halting train services. The incident occurred on Friday afternoon, with a video capturing the man hanging dangerously from high-tension wires while railway staff and onlookers attempted rescue. The man, in his 30s, climbed onto the station roof and gantry around 3pm. Power was switched off to facilitate rescue, and some trains were diverted. The ordeal lasted nearly 40 minutes before the man was saved, and train operations were briefly affected during the incident, officials confirmed. *—PTI*

SC issues pan-India directions for road safety

Court bans parking of heavy vehicles on expressways, NHs

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Observing that expressways must not become corridors of peril due to administrative lethargy or infrastructural gaps, the Supreme Court issued pan-India guidelines for enhancing road safety, including a ban on parking of heavy vehicles on such roads.

Justices JK Maheshwari and AS Chandurkar pointed out that NHs constitute just two per cent of India's total road length but account for nearly 30 per cent of all road fatalities.

The SC passed the order in a suo motu case registered after the loss of 34 lives in road accidents on 2 and 3 November 2025 in Phalodi in Rajasthan, and Rangareddy in Telangana.

The bench, which issued pan-India directions said, "Recognising the safety of the traveller as an integral facet of the right to live with dignity as a constitutional obligation under Article 21 of Constitution of India, these interim directions are issued as per Article 142 of the Constitution."

The SC also banned the construction or operation of any new eatery or commercial structure on National Highways *—PTI*

The directed that no commercial vehicle should park or stop on any national highway carriageway or paved shoulder except at a designated bay, lay-bye, or wayside facility.

It said the direction should be implemented through the Advanced Traffic Management System alerts to police, GPS–time stamped photographic evidence, and integrated eChallan.

One of the important directions is the prohibition on construction/operation of any new dhaba, eatery, or commercial structure in the Right of Way (ROW) of any NH.

- The SC passed the order in a suo motu case registered after the loss of 34 lives in accidents on 2 and 3 Nov 2025 at Phalodi in Rajasthan, and Rangareddy in T'gana

"District magistrates must demolish all new or existing unauthorised structures within 60 days as per the CNH Act procedure and SOP dated 7 August 2025," the bench directed.

It said no authority should grant or renew any licence, NOC, or trade approval for any site within highway safety zones without prior NHAI/PWD clearance and all existing licences for such sites must be reviewed within 30 days. *— PTI*

IF THERE IS NO COURT ORDER

Hindu father can forcibly take away minor, says HC

PRAYAGRAJ, 19 APRIL

The Allahabad High Court has dismissed as non-maintainable a habeas corpus petition moved by a woman seeking custody of her minor children from her estranged husband, observing that the father is the natural guardian of a Hindu minor and cannot be said to have illegally detained a child even if he forcibly takes custody unless such an act violates a court order.

The mother had moved court alleging that her estranged husband forcibly took away their two minor children at gunpoint in 2022.

Dismissing the petition, Justice Anil Kumar-X, relying on the SC judgment in the Tejaswini Gaud and others vs Shekhar Jagdish Prasad Tewari and others case, observed that habeas corpus in child custody matters can be invoked only when the custody of a child is illegal.

On behalf of mother, Anjali

Devi, it was submitted that several applications were filed before different forums seeking custody of the minors.

The petitioner's counsel also relied upon the HC judgment in the Rinku Ram alias Rinku Devi and another Vs UP and seven others to argue that the court can invoke its powers in the best interests of the child.

It was also contended that the order in the Rinku Ram case was different as in that case the minor was forcibly taken away violating an order of the Child Welfare Committee which had directed that custody be handed over to the mother. *— PTI*

IAF special forces to get compact UAV system

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

The government has started the process for procuring a compact unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) for IAF's special forces that can operate in extreme environmental conditions, and at altitudes of up to 16,400 feet, officials said.

The planned system is intended for "high-altitude surveillance" and operational support across a range of terrain and climatic conditions. It is also envisaged to have increased range and endurance compared to the existing system, they said.

The defence ministry recently issued a request for information (RFI) for procuring a 'Micro UAV' system for the Indian Air Force's Garud Special Forces.

The proposed system should also be able to support day and night surveillance, target acquisition and real-time situational awareness, the officials said.

The 'Micro UAV' system is envisaged as a compact, lightweight, man-portable platform designed for Special Forces' operations, they said.

This elite IAF unit currently

has a "similar system," and the new one will be an upgraded one, and an "Indian-made one with latest specifications," a senior official said.

"The system is required to operate in extreme environmental conditions, including temperatures ranging from minus 20 degrees Celsius to plus 50 degrees Celsius, and at altitudes up to 16,400 feet above mean sea level," the official added.

It should have a minimum mission range of 15 km, endurance of at least 60 minutes, and the ability to "operate with a two-person crew," the official said.

The system must also be capable of operating in GPS-denied environments and be scalable to Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), they said. *— PTI*

Punjab Governor clears anti-sacrilege Bill

CHANDIGARH, 19 APRIL

Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria has given his assent to the Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Bill, 2026, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said on Sunday.

The Bill proposes stricter punishment, including life imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs 25 lakh, for any act of sacrilege against the Guru Granth Sahib.

It was unanimously passed by the Punjab Assembly on 13 April and was sent to the Governor for assent.

In a post on X in Punjabi, Mann said, "The Bill passed in the Vidhan Sabha against the sacrilege of Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji has been signed by Governor Shri Gulab Chand Kataria ji. Now this Bill has become law. I am very grateful to Waheguru ji for taking this service from a humble person like me. Thanks to the 'Sangat'."

The AAP government had

convened a special session of the Vidhan Sabha on 13 April to amend the Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar Act, 2008, providing for stricter punishment against sacrilege of the Guru Granth Sahib.

According to the Bill, any person who commits an offence of sacrilege of the 'Saroop(s)' (sacred scripture) of the Guru Granth Sahib shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which shall not be less than seven years but which may extend to even 20 years. There shall also be a fine of not less than Rs 2 lakh but may extend up to Rs 10 lakh. *— PTI*

Vice Prez holds talks with Lankan President

COLOMBO, 19 APRIL

Vice President CP Radhakrishnan met Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Sunday and held discussions on various initiatives, including the Indian housing project, and fishermen's issues between the two South Asian neighbours.

Accompanied by a 49-member delegation, the Indian Vice President was received at the Bandaranaike International Airport by Sports Minister Sunil Kumara Gamage and other dignitaries.

Radhakrishnan discussed the implementation of ongoing Indian projects in Sri Lanka, emphasising the USD 450 million cyclone relief aid under India's 'Neighbourhood

Vice President CP Radhakrishnan met Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake in Colombo on Sunday *—X/VP*

First' policy. Radhakrishnan's visit is the first ever by an Indian vice president to Sri Lanka. *— PTI*

Kannur college denies caste angle in BDS student's death

KANNUR, 19 APRIL

The management of the Kannur Dental College, where a BDS student died after allegedly jumping from a building, said on Sunday that his death was not due to caste discrimination but linked to a loan taken through a mobile app.

The statement was issued by Medical Director Dr Adnan Siddique.

Nithin Raj, a first-year BDS student at a private dental college in Anjarakandy, was found critically injured after falling from a building on 10 April and later died.

Police registered a case against two faculty members for abetment of suicide

and as per the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

The college said that neither Raj nor his family had complained of caste discrimination.

The allegation is that a teacher made improper comments. The college authorities claimed that no complaints were filed against the teacher.

They also said they had handed over CCTV footage, letters Raj wrote to his father, and his examination papers to the police.

The management said Raj had taken a loan through an app, following which one of his teachers began receiving frequent calls from loan operators, which she reported to the principal.

Raj was then called to the principal's office, where he said the loan had been taken for his brother-in-law Asokan, it said.

Subsequently, the teacher decided to file a complaint with the cyber police. After this, Raj left the principal's room and allegedly jumped from the building, the statement said. *— PTI*

Panel to probe student suicides at NIT Kurukshetra

KURUKSHETRA, 19 APRIL

NIT Kurukshetra has constituted a five-member committee to investigate recent student suicides on the campus and set up three committees to look into issues faced by students.

The probe panel will interact with students, professors, wardens, and other staff over the issue.

The panel is headed by Dean of Student Welfare Prof Lillie Dewan and includes Prof J K Kapoor, Prof Praveen Aggarwal, Dr Sandeep Singhal, and Dr Manoj Sinha.

The development comes days after a 19-year-old BTech student, Diksha Dubey, who hailed from Bihar, allegedly committed suicide on Thursday.

Her death sparked protests on campus. Dubey's death marked the fourth such incident on the campus in the last two months.

After Dubey's death, a first-year BTech student allegedly attempted to commit suicide on Friday night, police said.

The female student from Maharashtra allegedly tried to jump off the hostel building, but was stopped by fellow hostellers.

Professor Bhushan also said that the administration has ordered all students to vacate hostels by Sunday. *— PTI*

Reports on cracks in Wayanad houses baseless: Sivankutty

THIRU'PURAM, 19 APRIL

Senior CPI(M) leader V Sivankutty dismissed reports claiming cracks in houses being built for landslide survivors in Wayanad township as "completely baseless". Speaking at a press conference, the Education Minister described the claims as "utter falsehoods" and clarified that Revenue Minister K Rajan had visited the site.

He explained waterproofing work was still ongoing, with pencil markings indicating minor water seepage, which some misrepresented as cracks. Sivankutty assured the government would not hand over houses without ensuring 100 per cent quality.

The contractor, Uralungal Labour Contract Co-operative Society, is responsible for maintenance for five years, with part of the payment withheld until no complaints arise. He added 102 houses will be completed soon, with 178 expected to be handed over by early May, and up to Rs 1 lakh allocated for furniture.

Sivankutty criticised the Congress Youth Wing for spreading misinformation over unfulfilled promises and unaccounted funds. *— PTI*

PAHALGAM ANNIVERSARY

Security beefed up in J&K tourist spots

SRINAGAR, 19 APRIL

Security has been beefed up at Kashmir tourist spots ahead of the first anniversary of the Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people were shot dead by Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists on 22 April 2025, officials said.

All security agencies have been asked to remain alert to tackle subversive activities on the eve of the Pahalgam terror attack anniversary.

Preparatory meetings to devise a fool proof security plan were held at the ground level while senior officers recently reviewed these arrangements, they said.

On 22 April 2025, a terrorist attack ripped through the quaint Baisaran meadow in Pahalgam, killing 25 tourists and a local pony-ride operator.

The new security checks are mandatory for all tourism service providers including ponywallahs, before they interact with visitors *—PTI*

The attack carried out by Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists led to an exodus of tourists from J&K, forcing the authorities to close nearly 50 tourist spots.

Now the meadows of Pahalgam are once again buzzing with tourists, with none regretting their decision to visit the 'Mini Switzerland' in Anantnag district.

Several new measures have been introduced in Pahalgam resort to ensure tourist safety. These include antecedent checks on all service providers including ponywallahs, before they deal with visitors.

A unique QR code-based identification system has been introduced for all tourism service providers.

The system enables easy identification and verification of genuine and registered service providers, including pony-ride operators, hawkers, business establishments, as well as outside vendors.

The QR codes contain the service provider's name, detailed address, mobile number, Aadhaar number, registration number, operational route, and whether they are police-verified. — PTI

Man held for murdering his twin daughters in UP

KANPUR, 19 APRIL

A man has been arrested for allegedly murdering his 11-year-old twin daughters by slitting their throats in Kanpur. After the murder, the wife of the accused said he was an alcoholic and used to beat and starve her.

The couple had a love marriage in 2014. However, soon the relationship worsened. The woman, Reshma Chhetri, also claimed that her husband had installed CCTV cameras all over the house.

She alleged that she was attacked by her husband whenever she tried to leave for her parents' place. Reshma also said that her husband used to ask him to leave with their son and that he would keep the daughters with him.

She said that she returned after about nine months as she wanted to see her daughters.

She said that she was not allowed to enter her husband's room and that her husband had often said that he wanted to kill himself and the twins.

Regarding the murder of her daughters, she said everything seemed normal. The family had dinner, and then her husband took the twins to his room to sleep. Reshma said she could see on the CCTV that her husband was on the phone. Around 2.30 am, he took a daughter to the toilet and returned, she recalled. Reshma said there was no sound after that.

She said she did not realise her daughters had been killed and that her husband himself informed the police about the crime. *— Agencies*

HEAT TESTS INDIA

India reels under an intense heatwave, with temperatures already crossing 40–43°C and likely to climb further. In Keralam's T'puram, priests walk barefoot under umbrellas made of dried leaves to beat the heat. In Kolkata, a man cools off with coconut water, while in Ahmedabad, children play in a fountain on a sweltering evening *-PTI/ANI*

Pregnant women in slums suffer amid soaring heat

Dizziness, sleepless nights, hypertension -- pregnant women in Delhi's slums are already bearing the brunt of temperatures beginning to breach 40 degrees Celsius in the national capital.

Speaking to PTI, Rekha, a 38-week pregnant woman from Dakshinpuri's Sanjay camp, said she struggles to sleep at night, waking up repeatedly as the discomfort caused by heat and humidity amid pregnancy makes it impossible to lie still.

"I often feel anxious and struggle to sleep. Heat and humidity make the discomfort worse, and often cause shortness of breath, but going to a doctor is not something we can easily do," Rekha said.

"In this extreme heat, there's little I can do except sit under a fan for some relief," she said.

Rekha, who lives with her husband in a small, cramped room with a tin roof that traps heat, said that whenever she complains, people suggest she change her living situation something she and her husband cannot afford to do.

"There is a consistent feeling of restlessness and unease. I have been sleeping very little, especially since my second trimester," said Shabnam, a 29-week pregnant woman living in Dakshinpuri's Mini Subash camp. "The heat and humidity started surging all of a sudden last week. I started experiencing frequent headaches, anxiety and even shortness of breath," she added.

Mini Subash camp's 28-year-old Ayesha, who is in her third trimester, highlighted similar concerns and noted that it is "impossible to sleep until 2 to 3 am until the heat settles."

Doctors said dizziness, vomiting and loss of consciousness are symptoms that pregnant women should not be ignore during heatwaves *–AI*

Like Rekha and Shabnam, Ayesha too finds herself battling restlessness and anxiety due to heat and humidity.

Speaking about the warning signs of extreme heat on pregnant women, Harshal Ramesh Salve, professor at the Centre for Community Medicine under the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), said dizziness, vomiting and loss of consciousness are symptoms that should not be ignored.

According to Salve, what makes the heat stress particularly concerning is the unpredictability of climate patterns nowadays. "Extreme temperatures are arriving earlier in the summer now, and what lies ahead in May or June remains uncertain. Pregnancy is already a vulnerable period, making extreme heat a serious risk -- for the mother as well as the newborn. But what is important to understand is that illness and deaths associated with heat exposure are entirely preventable," Salve said. Higher heat stress exposure, particularly in the second trimester, can impact the congenital formation (birth defects) of the newborn, and higher impact in the later stages of pregnancy increases the likelihood of premature delivery — that is, delivery before 37 weeks — or stillbirth. Heat stress also affects the child's long-term development, making its impact incremental. Exposure to air pollution compounds the risk, with both heat and pollution having an integrated and incremental impact on pregnancy and its outcomes.

Salve highlighted that pregnant women living in slums, working outdoors or in agricultural fields often continue to work through their pregnancy, making them more vulnerable to the effects of heat.

On preventable measures, he said that awareness needs to be generated within communities, among pregnant women as well as young women approaching marriageable age, about the impact of heat on pregnancy and its outcomes.

"IMD's warnings, along with their health implications, need to reach communities -- particularly vulnerable sections such as slum-dwellers and those working outdoors during peak summer days. Advocacy around preventive strategies, maintaining hydration and making cooling solutions available is especially needed for those exposed to heat through their work," Salve said.

Highlighting that interventions are available to tackle heat stress, he cited low-cost cooling solutions, such as changing roof materials and providing shade in workplaces, to prevent extreme heat from raising indoor temperatures. Heat impacts women far more, and data shows they are 14 times more likely to lose lives to climate change events, including heat, said environmentalist Bharati Chaturvedi. "For a pregnant woman, the body is already under significant strain, and heat adds to it further by pushing up the heart rate. This can lead to pre-term births, stillbirths and abnormal blood pressure," Chaturvedi told PTI.

She added that breathing becomes harder, air pollution in the heat changes its form, increasing ozone levels, and all of it comes down on women together. *—PTI*

SALAR سالار

Droughts are worsening antibiotic resistance: Study

Antibiotic resistance is usually blamed on hospitals and the overuse of medicines in farming. Both are serious and well-documented problems. But emerging research is pointing to a less obvious contributor: droughts driven by climate change.

A recent study in Nature Microbiology suggests that when soil dries out, it can accelerate the natural processes that create and spread antibiotic resistance. This does not mean droughts directly produce so-called "superbugs" in hospitals. However, it does indicate that a warming climate could quietly intensify an already critical global health threat.

The issue is particularly relevant for the UK. Climate projections indicate that summers are likely to become hotter and drier, with more frequent and prolonged droughts if greenhouse gas emissions remain high. At the same time, the NHS is already under pressure from antibiotic-resistant infections. These infections are harder to treat, often require longer hospital stays, and can lead to more severe outcomes.

When commonly used antibiotics fail, doctors are forced to rely on powerful alternatives known as "drugs of last resort". These medicines are deliberately used sparingly because overuse risks rendering them ineffective as well. If resistance continues to grow, even these final lines of defence could be compromised.

To understand the link with drought, it helps to look beneath our feet. Soil is one of the most biologically active environments on Earth, packed with bacteria and other microorganisms. Many of these bacteria naturally produce antibiotics as a way of killing off competitors. Others carry genes that make them resistant to these chemical attacks.

In healthy, moist soil, these microbial communities exist in a relatively stable balance. But drought disrupts that balance. As soil dries, water becomes trapped in tiny, isolated pockets. Bacteria are forced into closer proximity, while nutrients become scarce. Competition intensifies.

Under these harsher conditions, bacteria step up their chemical warfare. They produce more antibiotics to suppress rivals, while neighbouring microbes evolve or activate resistance mechanisms to survive. The result is a microscopic arms race, fuelled by environmental stress.

This matters because bacteria are not limited to passing genes down through generations. They can also share genetic material directly with one another through a process known as horizontal gene transfer. In simple terms, it is like swapping survival tips. Genes that confer antibiotic resistance can move between entirely different bacterial species.

That creates a potential pathway from soil to human health. Resistance genes that evolve in environmental bacteria can, in some cases, end up in bacteria that infect people. Scientists have already identified similarities between resistance genes found in soil microbes and those seen in clinical infections, suggesting a long-standing evolutionary link.

Large-scale studies add another layer to the picture. Some have found that drier regions of the world tend to report higher levels of antibiotic-resistant infections in hospitals. However, these findings show correlation rather than direct causation. Other factors, such as differences in healthcare systems, surveillance methods, or access to treatment, could also play a role.

Even so, the pattern is striking enough to warrant closer investigation.

Adding to the concern is the fact that some soil bacteria are closely related to well-known hospital pathogens. These include species linked to some of the most difficult-to-treat infections. While this does not mean dangerous bacteria are simply moving from soil into hospitals, it does highlight how interconnected environmental and clinical microbial worlds are.

Antibiotic resistance already causes millions of infections globally each year. Efforts to tackle it have rightly focused on reducing unnecessary antibiotic use in medicine and agriculture. Those measures remain essential. But the emerging evidence suggests they may not be sufficient on their own.

The environment itself may be an active player in the evolution and spread of resistance. As climate change alters ecosystems, it could reshape microbial behaviour in ways that favour the development of stronger, more resilient bacteria.

This is where the concept of "One Health" becomes increasingly important. The idea recognises that human health, animal health and environmental health are deeply interconnected. Antibiotic resistance, viewed through this lens, is not just a clinical issue but an ecological one as well.

Addressing it will require a broader approach that goes beyond prescribing practices and farm management. It will mean paying closer attention to how environmental changes, including drought, influence microbial life.

For the UK and other countries facing a warmer, drier future, that presents a new challenge. Scientists will need to monitor not only hospitals and farms, but also soils and ecosystems. Policymakers may need to factor environmental conditions into strategies for controlling resistance.

The message from the latest research is not one of alarm, but of complexity. Antibiotic resistance is shaped by many forces, some visible and others hidden. As the climate continues to change, the ground beneath us may play a larger role than previously understood. *(The Conversation)*

Some have found that drier regions of the world tend to report higher levels of antibiotic-resistant infections in hospitals *-FREEPIK*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

What is 25th Amendment & could it be used to remove Trump as Prez?

US President Donald Trump's recent intemperate exchanges with the pope, his depiction of himself as a Christ-like figure and his threat to wipe out the civilisation of Iran have raised questions about his mental capacity to carry out his job.

This week, former CIA Director John Brennan joined calls for the 25th Amendment of the US Constitution to be invoked to remove Trump from the presidency, which he said was "written with Donald Trump in mind". So what is the 25th Amendment and how would it work?

WHAT DOES THE AMENDMENT SAY?

The amendment is designed to clarify some constitutional ambiguities in the event the president is unable to continue in the role. The first three sections of the amendment are straightforward and uncontroversial.

Section 1 simply states that if a vice president succeeds on the death or resignation of the president, they become president (that is, not merely acting president).

Section 2 provides the mechanism for filling a vacancy in the vice presidency.

Section 3 provides for the president to temporarily hand over the powers and duties of office to the vice president during a period of incapacity (for example, such as undergoing anaesthetic).

Section 4 is a much more complex and potentially difficult arrangement to relieve a president of the duties and responsibilities of office temporarily. The 25th Amendment tackles the problem of presidents who are unfit to continue in office, but don't recognise their disability.

It is this section of the amendment that is currently making news because of the reaction to Trump's recent social media posts and behaviour, and the efforts of some leading figures in Washington to invoke the 25th Amendment provision to remove Trump from the presidency.

THE DISABILITY CLAUSE

Section 4 of the amendment works like this. The vice president and a majority of departmental heads declare to the speaker of the House of Representatives and the president pro tem of the Senate – the Senate's second-highest ranking official – that the president is "unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office". If approved, the vice president becomes acting president until such time as the president submits "a written declaration to the contrary."

Calls to invoke the 25th Amendment against President Donald Trump have intensified *-PTI*

After that declaration is made, the president resumes the powers and duties of office unless the vice president and a majority of the heads of the executive departments challenge the president's response within four days.

If that happens, Congress has 21 days to debate and decide the issue by a two-thirds vote of both houses.

It should be noted the amendment refers to "a majority of the principal officers of the executive departments" and not the Cabinet, as is often mentioned when the disability clause is reported in the media. Trump's Cabinet consists of 21 members, only 15 of whom are principal officers of executive departments.

So, if the disability provision were to be implemented, the vice president would need eight of the department heads to join him.

The process also depends on the willingness of just one person – the vice president – to implement it, because the procedure doesn't work with only a majority of the departmental heads. Finally, even if the amendment was implemented, it wouldn't actually remove Trump from the presidency. He would remain president, albeit relieved of the powers and duties of office for a temporary period. And JD Vance would only have the title of acting president.

HOW WOULD IT WORK IN TRUMP'S CASE?

Even assuming the very unlikely possibility that Vance and eight of the 15 department heads would be willing to implement it, there would be a lot of uncertainty about how the 25th Amendment would work against Trump.

The major weakness of the amendment in Trump's case would be the provision that allows the president to override the determination of the vice president and the majority of department heads by simply informing Congress that "no inability exists".

No medical evidence is required, and the amendment doesn't define "inability".

Whatever his mental state may be, Trump is not physically disabled, so there would appear to be no physical impediment to him signing a piece of paper declaring that "no inability exists."

The amendment doesn't even require Congress to review the president's "no inability exists" letter. Trump would be restored to the presidency the moment he transmitted the document.

For the process to be taken further, the vice president would have to move against Trump a second time, both houses of Congress would have to debate Trump's mental state, and super-majorities in both chambers would be necessary to relieve Trump of his duties again. It would risk the 25th Amendment turning into a constitutional crisis.

All of this means any claim the 25th Amendment was "written with Donald Trump in mind" must be questioned. It may be appropriate for a president who is suffering major physical disabilities, such as Woodrow Wilson following his stroke in 1919, or James Garfield's slow lingering death in 1881.

But it is less well equipped to deal with a president who may or may not be mentally incapacitated but is physically able to fight back. The 25th Amendment is about dealing with the temporary disability of a president not a method of impeaching the president by other means.

Impeachment remains the only constitutional way of holding a president to account. *—The Conversation*

FBI Chief Kash Patel denies binge drinking reports

WASHINGTON, 19 APRIL

FBI Director Kash Patel has denied allegations reported in The Atlantic that he drinks excessively and has been unreachable at times during his tenure. Patel threatened legal action, stating, "Print it, all false, I'll see you in court – bring your checkbook." He also posted on his official FBI account, addressing "the fake news" and "the hit piece lies," adding, "Keep talking. It means I'm doing exactly what I should be doing." The report, attributed to two dozen officials, claims Patel's heavy drinking and difficulty in being reached have caused concern, with some fearing he might soon be dismissed. He has faced criticism for actions including social media announcements and use of government jets. —*AGENCIES*

Bulgarians vote in 8th election in 5 years

SOFIA, 19 APRIL

Bulgarians are voting today in their eighth election in five years, aiming to resolve longstanding political deadlock. The vote follows the resignation of a Conservative-led government amid nationwide protests last December demanding an independent judiciary and measures against corruption. Since 2021, Bulgaria's fragmented parliaments have led to weak governments, with none lasting over a year. The election is significant as it could usher in a pro-Russian, left-leaning government led by former President Rumen Radev, who resigned in January to run for Prime Minister. Radev, supported by the centre-Left Progressive Bulgaria coalition, promises to tackle oligarchic corruption. Polls open at 7am and close at 8pm, with initial results expected on Monday. Bulgaria is an EU and NATO member. —*PTI*

US Midwest tornadoes cause damage, no deaths

WISCONSIN, 19 APRIL

A series of tornadoes and destructive winds swept across the US Midwest, damaging homes and uprooting trees. No fatalities were reported, but residents faced extensive recovery efforts. Stephenson County Sheriff Steve Stovall said, "We are extremely fortunate that this storm did not result in loss of life." In Wisconsin and Minnesota, officials reported significant damage, with tornadoes damaging homes and trapping residents in basements. In Kronenwetter, neighbours helped clear debris. In Olmsted County, Minnesota, homes were damaged. Photos also showed torn roofs, shattered windows, and demolished fences in Illinois' Lena. —*PTI*

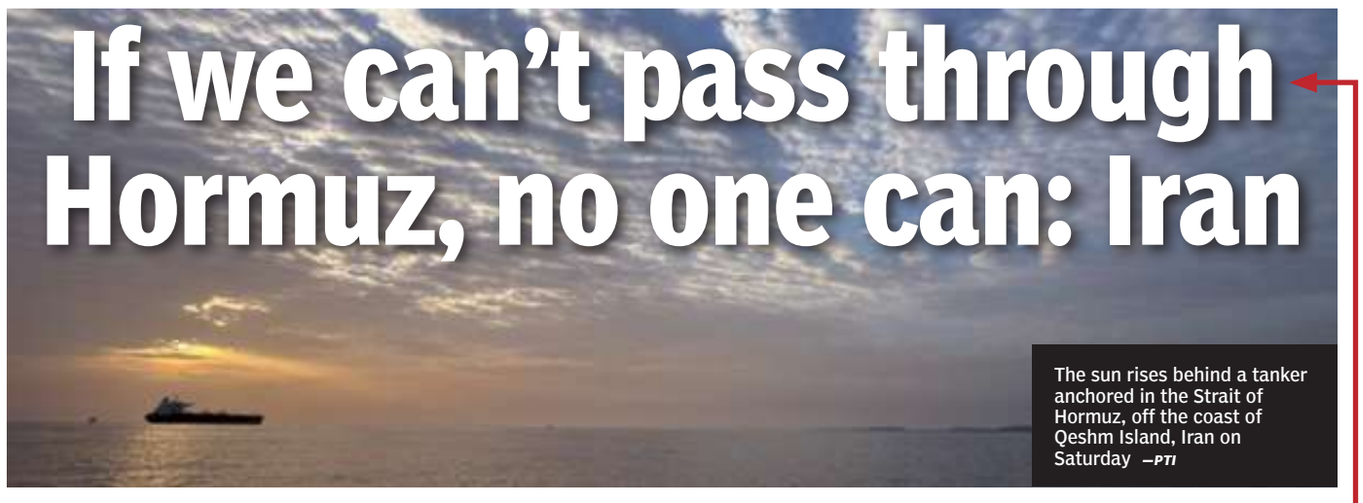
—PTI

Obama meets Mamdani in New York child centre

NEW YORK, 19 APRIL

Former US president Barack Obama met with New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani at a childcare centre, where they read "Alone and Together" and led a singalong of "The Wheels on the Bus." The event marked Mamdani's 100th day in office, highlighting their first meeting. Obama, a Democratic Party figure, offered to support Mamdani, whose youth and progressive agenda have made him prominent. Mamdani, a democratic socialist, aims to make New York City more affordable, focusing on helping the working class. The meeting followed two earlier encounters with Republican Donald Trump in November and February. Trump recently posted that Mamdani was "destroying" New York" with his policies and threatened to cut federal funding. —*PTI*

If we can't pass through Hormuz, no one can: Iran



The sun rises behind a tanker anchored in the Strait of Hormuz, off the coast of Qeshm Island, Iran on Saturday —*PTI*

Don't appeal to int'l law when US-Israel can attack us: Iran

CAIRO, 19 APRIL

Iran doubled down on its pledge to restrict ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz as long as the US blockade of Iranian ports remains in place.

"It is impossible for others to pass through the Strait of Hormuz while we cannot," Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammed Bagher Ghalibaf said in an interview on state television late on Saturday.

Ghalibaf, who is Iran's chief negotiator with the US, slammed the US blockade as a "naive decision made out of ignorance." He said Iran was still seeking peace despite deep-seated distrust of the US.

"The gaps remain wide, and some fundamental issues are still unresolved," he said.

Iran had announced the Strait's reopening after a 10-day truce between Israel and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon took hold on Friday. But after US President Donald Trump said the US blockade of Iran's ports "will remain in full force" until a deal is reached, Iran again closed the Strait, through which nearly a fifth of the world's oil once passed.

For Iran, the Strait's closure is one of its most important weapons, as the closure has sent oil prices spiralling to record highs.

Meanwhile, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei accused Western nations of "hypocrisy" when appealing to international law.

Kalas had said that passage through key waterways like Hormuz "must remain open and free of charge" under international law.

Baghaei responded on X: "The (international law) that the EU dusts off to lecture others while quietly green-lighting a US-Israeli war of aggression--and looking the other way on atrocities against Iranians? Spare the sermons; Europe's chronic failure to practice what it preaches has turned its 'international law' talk into peak hypocrisy."

He asserted that Iran has the right to take measures in the Strait, stating, "No rule of international law forbids Iran from taking necessary measures to stop the Strait of Hormuz being used for waging aggression."

He also stated that the "fiction" of unconditional transit has sailed. —*Agencies*

Israel strikes Lebanon despite ceasefire

BEIRUT, 19 APRIL

The Israeli army said it carried out fresh strikes south of the "Yellow Line" in south Lebanon on Sunday, even as a 10-day ceasefire was in place. The complete details of the strikes were not immediately clear, but Lebanon's National News Agency reported "heavy bombing" on houses in several towns.

The Yellow Line is a military demarcation that differentiates parts controlled by the military and places from where "threats" could emerge. Israel has established a Yellow Line in Gaza, effectively splitting the region into two. However, this is the first time Israel has used the term in Lebanon.

The US-brokered ceasefire deal allows Israel to occupy some 55 Lebanese villages and allows Israel to act in "self-defence".

Meanwhile, Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem criticised the deal, calling it an "insult" to Lebanon and warning that his fighters are prepared to retaliate against any Israeli strikes targeting Lebanese territory.

> **Whether people like Israel or not, they have proven to be a great ally of the US. They are courageous, bold, loyal, smart and, unlike others that have shown their true colours in a moment of conflict and stress. Israel fights hard, and knows how to win**
>
> —Donald Trump, US President

"A ceasefire means a complete cessation of all hostilities," he said in a televised address. "Because we do not trust this enemy, the resistance fighters will remain in the field with their hands on the trigger."

He also described the Lebanese government's decision to hold direct talks with Israel in decades as a form of "humiliation".

If the ceasefire breaks, civilians will again bear the brunt. Nearly 1 million people in Lebanon have been displaced because of the war. Thousands began returning home to south Lebanon after the ceasefire announcement. —*Agencies*

An ambulance belonging to Hezbollah's health unit lies in the rubble of a medical centre destroyed by Israel, in Jibchit, Lebanon —*PTI*

Pak tightens security for potential US-Iran talks

ISLAMABAD, 19 APRIL

Pakistani authorities have begun taking stringent security measures for the safety of delegates ahead of the US-Iran talks in Islamabad.

The US and Iran held their first high-level direct talks since the 1979 Islamic Revolution on 11 and 12 April in Islamabad, but the negotiations ended without a breakthrough. Pakistan has since been trying to bring the two nations back to the table, with Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir even spending three days in Tehran.

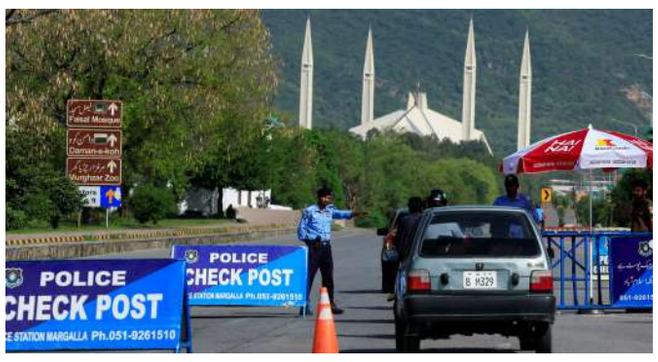
More than 10,000 police personnel have been deployed and over 600 checkpoints have been established across Rawalpindi, the sprawling city adjacent to Islamabad.

The security protocol is also being implemented in the capital city and red alert has been issued in Rawalpindi.

Restaurants are to be shut after midnight and parks, beauty parlours, markets, snooker clubs, fitness centres, paan shops, kiosks, barber shops, banks and bakeries must be closed.

Authorities have announced that from Sunday midnight, several sensitive areas surrounding Nur Khan Airbase in Rawalpindi and Islamabad International Airport will also be sealed.

This also comes as US President Donald Trump has floated the idea of going to Islamabad if a deal is reached. —*PTI*



At least 10,000 police officers have been deployed in Rawalpindi alone —*x*

HOUTHIS THREATEN TO CLOSE BAB EL-MANDEB STRAIT

SANAA, 19 APRIL

The Houthi rebels in Yemen have again threatened to close the Bab el-Mandeb Strait that connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean if US President Donald Trump doesn't end "all practices and policies that obstruct peace".

In a post on X, the Deputy Foreign Minister Houthi official Hussein al-Ezzi said that "all of mankind will be utterly powerless" to open the 29km waterway, through which around 10 per cent of the world's oil passes. When the Houthis began firing missiles at tankers during Isael's attacks on Gaza, oil prices skyrocketed.

However, given the current closure of the Strait of Hormuz, counties such as Saudi Arabia have begun relying more on the Red Sea to export its oil. —*ANI*

Hegseth denies reports of food shortage on warships

WASHINGTON, 19 APRIL

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth dismissed reports of food shortages aboard two primary American naval vessels deployed near the Strait of Hormuz. He compared the reporters who reported this to the Pharisees, the biblical Jewish group that opposed Jesus.

The controversy was sparked by accounts purportedly from crew members aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln and USS Tripoli destroyers, who claimed they were "hungry all the time". Families of the soldiers also reportedly attested to food rationing.

Hegseth, however said on X that both ships have "30 plus days of Class I supplies (food) on board," while lashing out at the "fake news from the Pharisee Press".

The US Navy also issued a statement terming the reports as entirely false, claiming it had "unmatched logistics capability". —*ANI*

The US Navy posted images showing sailors on the USS Abraham Lincoln and USS Tripoli eating well after (inset) reports claimed that they were rationing food —*X@USNAVY*

Trump bins plan to seize Kharg Island: Report

Trump has shelved proposals to capture Iran's crucial Kharg Island because he fears that the US soldiers would become "sitting ducks", leading to mass casualties, the Wall Street Journal said. Trump has repeatedly threatened to take the island, which accounts for nearly 90 per cent of Iran's oil revenue.

Trump pulled into Iran war by Bibi: Kamala

Former US vice president Kamala Harris said that Trump was "pulled into" the Iran war by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. At the same time, she claimed it was a "feeble attempt" to distract from the "Epstein files." Either way, she noted the "the American people do not want" the war.

Grateful to Pope Leo: Vance on feud with Trump

US Vice President JD Vance on Friday said he was "grateful" for Pope Leo XIV, saying differences between the Pontiff and Trump are often more "complicated" than portrayed. The Pope recently said that he doesn't want to debate Trump after the two exchanged words over the Iran war.

Don't see US leaving NATO, says Rutte

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte said that he doesn't "see the US leaving NATO" even as Trump has belittled the alliance as a "paper tiger" and threatened to break away. Rutte said he has no doubts about the US commitment, as "the American nuclear umbrella is the guarantor of security in Europe".

The missiles, fired from Sinpo, flew approximately 140kms—*x*

North Korea launches multiple missiles toward sea

SEOUL, 19 APRIL

North Korea launched several short-range ballistic missiles into the eastern waters on Sunday, according to South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff. The missiles, fired from Sinpo, flew approximately 140 kilometres (87 miles), with South Korea, the US, and Japan all detecting the launches. South Korea's military expressed concerns, urging North Korea to cease its missile tests, and stated it remains prepared to respond to any provocations.

The US Indo-Pacific Command reaffirmed its commitment to defending allies, while Japan's Defence Ministry condemned the launches as threats to regional peace and violations of UN Security Council resolutions. Analysts are investigating whether the missiles were launched from land, a submarine, or both, with a potential submarine launch marking North Korea's first in four years. Such a capability would be a worrying development, as submarine-launched missiles are difficult to detect.

North Korea has recently tested various weapons, including missiles armed with cluster bombs and upgraded solid-fuel engines. Leader Kim Jong Un has focused on expanding his nuclear and missile arsenals, aiming to increase leverage with the US amid a backdrop of stalled diplomacy. —*PTI*

LEFT LEADERS SUPPORT CUBA

US' energy blockade cripples Cuba's tourism, nightlife

HAVANA/ BARCELONA, 19 APRIL

Under the weight of an oil embargo imposed by the second Trump administration and the island's most severe economic crisis in decades, Cuba's once-bustling nightlife has gone quiet. Havana's broad avenues are empty at night. Theatres are closed. Bars and cafes have their curtains lowered.

After a 2016 deal between then-presidents Barack Obama and Raúl Castro, which eased US travel to Cuba, tourism surged. By 2018, a record 4.7 million tourists visited the country.

But now, gasoline sales are limited to 20 litres per vehicle, and buses stop running at 6pm. Several international airlines have halted flights to Havana. The Cuban government reported the arrival of 77,600 tourists in February, down from 178,000 on the same month a year ago.

"This is worse than the Special Period," said 65-year-old Dolores de la Caridad Méndez about the years of economic devastation that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s.

The deepening economic crisis, accentuated by US sanctions from even before Trump, have crippled the island nation. Between 2021 and 2024, approximately 1.4 million Cubans left the island. Then, in January 2026, the US captured Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro and prevented Cuba from buying oil from its primary supplier.

Cuba's energy sector has been crippled by US pressure, resulting in frequent nationwide blackouts —*PTI*

BRAZIL, MEXICO, SPAIN BACK CUBA

Left-leaning governments of Mexico, Spain, and Brazil expressed "deep concern" over Cuba's escalating humanitarian crisis.

This collective appeal was formalised during a summit of leftist leaders in Barcelona, hosted by Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez. The gathering included Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum and Brazil's Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

US President Donald Trump has said that he would "take" Cuba "next". —*Agencies*

6 KILLED IN MASS SHOOTING IN KYIV

KYIV, 19 APRIL

A gunman wielding an automatic weapon killed six people and barricaded himself inside a supermarket with hostages in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, on Saturday, before he was shot and killed by police, authorities said. At least 14 people were wounded and taken to the hospital. The gunman had a valid weapon permit.

The 58-year-old attacker was not named by police.

"The attacker set fire to an apartment before taking to the streets with a weapon," said Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. "He had a prior criminal record, had lived in the Donetsk region in eastern Ukraine for a long period, and was born in Russia."

"The assailant has been neutralised. He had taken hostages and, tragically, killed one of them. He also murdered four people on the street. Another woman died in hospital due to severe injuries," Zelenskyy said.

The mass shooting — unheard of in Ukraine after Russia's all-out invasion— took place in a busy central district of the city. —*PTI*

— PTI

Adani sets up hotels, real estate airport city units

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Adani Enterprises Ltd (AEL) has incorporated three new subsidiaries through its step-down unit, Adani Airport City Ltd—namely Adani Navi Mumbai Airport City Ltd, Adani Guwahati Airport City Ltd, and Adani Ahmedabad Airport City Ltd—to focus on hotel and real estate development.

The entities shall be engaged in the business of real estate with own or leased property, construction of buildings carried out on hotels with integrated restaurants, banquets and business centres. Each subsidiary has a paid-up capital of Rs 10 lakh, fully owned by Adani Airport City Ltd, with shares subscribed in cash at face value. The company did not say whether it will build hotels near its airports.—*PTI*

Mumbai airport fines firm for plane damage

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Mumbai airport operator MIAL has penalised state-owned AI Airport Services Ltd (AIASL) after a dolly detached during ground-handling operations by striking and damaging a parked Gulf Air aircraft. Terming it a major incident causing reputational loss to the airport, Adani Group-owned MIAL has imposed a Rs 10 lakh fine on AIASL. The incident that damaged a Gulf Air aircraft occurred on 10 April, when AIASL personnel were towing loaded containers on dollies along the head-of-stand road near aircraft stands. During the towing operation, one of the rear dollies detached from the preceding unit and struck a parked Gulf Air aircraft. The impact caused airframe damage, MIAL said. —*PTI*

ITC eyes health market with protein-rich foods

BENGALURU, 19 APRIL

Diversified conglomerate ITC Ltd—as part of its strategy to expand in the fast-growing health and wellness space—is amplifying its play in the protein food segment, said Executive Director Hemant Malik. ITC has introduced unique protein-focused products, based on consumer insights. With consumer preferences shifting rapidly, ITC expects its health-focused portfolio to play a significant role in driving future growth, particularly in protein-based foods that address evolving dietary needs, he said. ITC's branded packaged foods business works with a host of brands, including Aashirvaad, Sunrise, Bingo! Sunfeast, Fabelle, Sunbean, Yippee!, B Natural, ITC Master Chef, and Farmland. ITC's focus is to democratise affordable protein products in the market, said Malik.—*PTI*

LPG consumption falls 13% amid Iran war

Domestic sale falls by 8.1% in March, while commercial drops 48% amid Hormuz closure

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

India's cooking gas LPG consumption fell by a steep 13 per cent in March as supply disruptions linked to the West Asia conflict hit availability for both household kitchens and commercial users.

LPG consumption was at 2,379 million tonne in March, 12.8 per cent lower than 2,729 million tonne consumed in the same period in 2025.

India imports about 60 per cent of its LPG requirements, much of it via the Strait of Hormuz, which was effectively shut following the West Asia conflict. With supplies from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates disrupted, the government has cut LPG supplies to commercial establishments to safeguard household cooking gas availability.

According to the Oil Ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC), LPG cylinder sold to domestic households fell 8.1 per cent in March to 2,219 million tonne while those sold to non-domestic users was down almost 48 per cent. Bulk LPG sales was down by a massive 75.5 per cent.

To offset the shortfall, the government directed refineries to divert the feedstock from petrochemical production to boost LPG output —*ANI*

To offset the shortfall, the government directed refineries to divert feedstock from petrochemical production to boost LPG output. This led to domestic LPG production rising to 1.4 million tonne in March from 1.1 million tonne a year back.

LPG consumption in the fiscal ended March 2026 was 6 per cent up to 33,212 million tonne.

Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) consumption witnessed almost flat growth at 807,000 tonne in March when compared with sale of 801,000 tonne a year ago. ATF sales were up 2 per cent to 9,161 million tonne in 2025-26

Petrol sales were up 7.6 per cent to 3.78 million tonne while diesel consumption rose 8.1 per cent to 8.727 million tonne.

Industrial fuels naphtha and fuel oil posted a loss of 9.9 per cent and 1.4 per cent, respectively while bitumen saw a 3 per cent rise in consumption to 8.84 million tonne. — *PTI*

'War-driven costs pushing beer industry into trouble'

BENGALURU, 19 APRIL

The Indian beer industry is facing 'major trouble' amid rising input costs triggered by the war, supply shortages, and restrictions on pricing imposed by state governments.

United Breweries Ltd (UBL) chief executive officer and managing director Vivek Gupta urged for government intervention He said the lack of regulatory support could stall growth and innovation in the sector and make it difficult to meet the promises.

The government has to come forward and support the domestic beer industry, otherwise it will stall innovation. The impact on beer is disproportionately higher than any other industry, he said.

Gupta also flagged regulatory constraints, noting that pricing for beer is largely controlled by state governments through excise policies.

He said about 75 per cent of the business is regulated. "We cannot even control pricing," he said, adding that he has been engaging with state authorities for relief.

Gupta sought a 15 per cent increase in selling price to the government, not to the consumer. He explained that a large share of realisation goes as taxes.

Over the can shortag is yet to be resolved. —*PTI*

Tata Trust seeks changes in trustee eligibility clauses

MUMBAI, 19 APRIL

Tata Trusts on Sunday said trustees of the Bai Hirabai Trust have decided to adopt proceedings before an appropriate authority for alteration of restrictive clauses, such as prohibition of non-Zoroastrians from being trustees, in the eligibility criteria of being a trustee in it.

The development comes days after Mehli Mistry, a former trustee of the Tata Trusts, challenged the appointments of veteran industrialist Venu Srinivasan and former defence secretary Vijay Singh to the board of Bai Hirabai Jamsetji Tata Navsari Charitable Institution (Bai Hirabai Trust) in a complaint to the Maharashtra Charity Commissioner.

In a statement, Tata Trusts said the Board of Trustees of the Bai Hirabai Trust met on April 17, 2026 under the Chairmanship of Noel N Tata, Chairman, Tata Trusts.

In order to correct anomalies in the Trust Deed and to align it with the values that the Tata Trusts have always epitomised, the trustees have decided to adopt proceedings before the appropriate authority for alteration of restrictive clauses in respect of eligibility of trustees, the statement said.

Mistry had earlier claimed that Srinivasan and Singh do not satisfy the criteria laid out in the trust deed, including practice of the Parsi Zoroastrian faith and residency in Mumbai.

Srinivasan, a trustee of Tata Trusts, resigned from the Bai Hirabai Trust, but later admitted to stepping down at the request of Tata Trusts management. —*PTI*

Iran war, oil prices, Q4 earnings to drive markets : Analysts

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Stock markets would keenly track developments in the US-Iran conflict, crude oil prices and quarterly earnings from corporates for further direction this week, analysts said.

Besides, trading activity of foreign investors would also influence trading in the markets, they noted.

Meanwhile, the ceasefire between the US and Iran is set to expire on 22 April.

Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said on the domestic front, focus will shift to the ongoing Q4 FY26 earnings season.

Market participants will initially react to results from banking heavyweights such as HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank. Subsequently, several key companies, including HCL Technologies, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Havells, IndusInd Bank, Shriram Finance, are scheduled to announce their results, he added. —*PTI*

India gets its 1st advanced 3D chip packaging unit

BHUBANESWAR, 19 APRIL

Odisha took a major leap into the global semiconductor value chain on Sunday as Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Union Electronics and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw launched the 3D Glass Solutions Inc.'s (3DGS) advanced chip packaging unit in Info Valley, Bhubaneswar.

3DGS will set up a vertically integrated advanced packaging and embedded glass substrate unit that will bring the world's most advanced packaging technology to India. The plant will host a wide range of next-generation technologies, including glass interposers with passives and silicon bridges, and 3D Heterogeneous Integration (3DHI) modules.

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi during the launch of the chip packaging unit in Bhubaneswar—*PTI*

Vaishnaw termed the foundation laying a "historic day" and said Odisha is emerging as a key hub for advanced technology and electronics manufacturing, an "IT hub", in India.

Planned capacity is 69,600 glass panel substrates, 50 million assembled units, and 13,200 3DHI modules per annum. The products will have significant applications in defence, computing and varied other fields. —*ANI*

Govt plans hike of FDI limit to 100% in pension sector

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

The government may hike the foreign direct investment (FDI) limit in the pension sector to up to 100 per cent and a Bill in this regard is expected in the next Parliament session, according to sources.

This would align with the insurance sector where up to 100 per cent FDI is permitted.

Last year, Parliament approved a Bill to increase the FDI limit in the insurance sector from 74 per cent to 100 per cent.

Amendment to Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) Act, 2013 seeking to raise the FDI limit in the pension sector may come in the Monsoon Session or Winter Session depending on various approvals, sources said. Currently, the FDI in pension fund is capped at 49 per cent.

Besides, sources said the amendment Bill may contain separation of NPS Trust from the PFRDA. The powers, functions and duties of the NPS Trust, which are currently laid down under the PFRDA (National Pension System Trust) Regulations 2015, may come under a charitable trust or the Companies Act, they further said. —*PTI*

Airtel tops as mcap of top firms surges by Rs 1.87L cr

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

The combined market valuation of eight of the top-10 most valued firms surged by Rs 1,87,497.45 crore in a holiday-shortened last week, with Bharti Airtel emerging as the biggest gainer, in line with a positive trend in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 943.29 points or 1.21 per cent, and the NSE Nifty climbed 302.95 points or 1.25 per cent.

"Markets ended the truncated week with notable gains, , supported by easing geopolitical tensions," Ajit Mishra – SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

The market valuation of Bharti Airtel jumped Rs 58,831.52 crore to Rs 11,25,125.21 crore, the most among the top-10 firms. LIC surged Rs 27,608.62 crore while TCS added Rs 20,731.64 crore, taking its market valuation to Rs 9,34,063.56 crore. However, mcap of HDFC Bank dropped by Rs 16,163.04 crore to Rs 12,31,315.53 crore. —*PTI*

TVS Supply settles debt dispute with ZTE

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

TVS Supply Chain Solutions has settled its debt dispute with ZTE Telecom India and withdrawn its appeal in the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT). The appeal had challenged an order that previously rejected insolvency proceedings against the telecom gear manufacturer.

Earlier this week, TVS Supply Chain's counsel informed the NCLAT of the settlement and sought to withdraw the appeal, which a two-member bench led by Chairperson Justice Ashok Bhushan and Member (Technical) Barun Mitra allowed.NCLT, in its order, had said that the debt claimed by TVS Supply Chain was disputed and under reconciliation dating back to 2017.

ZTE, a telecom equipment supplier for Reliance, Tata, Aircel, and BSNL, had entered into two Master Service Agreements (MSAs) with TVS Supply Chain.Under the Master Service Agreements (MSAs), TVS Supply Chain's invoices were payable within 30 days. —*PTI*

Air India to retrofit 7 Boeing 787-8 planes

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Air India expects to complete retrofitting of seven more legacy Boeing 787-8 planes this year as it upgrades the fleet of these aircraft that is key to the airline's long-haul operations.

The loss-making carrier, which is in the midst of an ambitious transformation plan, has received the first of its retrofitted legacy Boeing 787-8 plane, which has 250 seats in three class configuration of business, premium economy and economy. The plane landed in Delhi on 13 April.

Air India's Chief Customer Experience Officer Rajesh Dogra said the airline expects to complete retrofitting of a total of eight legacy Boeing 787-8s this year.

On Sunday, the airline unveiled the retrofitted, twin-aisle B787-8 (VT-ANT) that underwent a nose-to-tail cabin refresh.

According to Dogra, 85 per cent of the legacy Boeing 787-8 planes retrofit is expected to be completed by the end of 2027 and retrofitting of all such aircraft is likely to be over by the first quarter of 2028.

The Tata Group-owned airline has 33 Boeing 787s or Dreamliners in its fleet of over 190 planes. —*PTI*

FLEXIBLE AND TRANSPARENT

Digital gold a popular choice this Akshaya Tritiya: Analysts

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Flexible and transparent gold investment options are likely to remain popular alongside physical buying on this Akshaya Tritiya, as investors show a clear shift towards modern alternatives to the yellow metal, say analysts.

Analysts said investor participation is gradually evolving, with growing interest in financial investment avenues alongside traditional physical buying.

The brokerage in a report noted that bullion markets in 2026 have remained volatile amid geopolitical tensions, a slowdown in global growth and shifting monetary policy expectations.

Despite intermittent corrections, gold and silver have gained around 10 and 5 per cent year-to-date, respectively, reflecting continued safe-haven demand.

This trend is expected to strengthen as investors look for both convenience and liquidity, he added.

On the domestic front, elevated prices have kept jewellery demand subdued and price-sensitive, leading to discounted domestic prices, the report said.

Investors now have multiple avenues to gain exposure to gold, including physical bullion, exchange-traded funds, digital gold and derivatives, indicating a gradual shift towards more liquid investment options.

While there are phases of pressure due to interest rate expectations and currency strength, the broader outlook remains supported by uncertainty, inflation concerns, and long-term investment demand.

The report said factors such as geopolitical risks, slowing global growth and the possibility of monetary policy easing later in the year could support prices, while persistent inflation, a stronger US dollar and weak physical demand may act as near-term headwinds.

On the occasion of Akshay a Tritiya gold continues to remain a trusted asset for Indian households, bridging tradition and financial security in an increasingly uncertain world. —*PTI*

People purchase gold jewellary on Akshaya Tritiya in Basavanagudi in Bengaluru on Sunday —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

Father of AGI predicts human-level AI in 3 years

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Ben Goertzel predicts a job apocalypse affecting professionals —*x*

Ben Goertzel, the father of 'artificial general intelligence' (AGI), has predicted that AI matching human intelligence could emerge within two to three years.

He predicts a 'job apocalypse' affecting many professions, but also envisions a future of greater personal freedom, creativity, and the need for universal basic income. His outlook mirrors AI's societal risks, including bias, inequality, and overreliance on technology.

Goertze's forecast mirrors earlier predictions by OpenAI's Sam Altman. Goertzel notes the shift will be gradual but transformative, reshaping economies and daily life.

Goertzel warns that majority of current professions may become obsolete as AGI matures. Creative and professional roles like lawyers and graphic artists are already seeing faster disruption than manual trades. Broader AI risk discussions highlight that automation could widen inequality if benefits are concentrated among a few.

With robots managing much of the economy, individuals could devote more time to relationships, hobbies, and creative pursuits. Future scenarios for AGI integration

If AGI arrives within the next three years, there will be a rapid displacement of knowledge-based jobs, forcing governments across the globe to implement universal basic income. —*Agencies*

Rinku brings out his best as KKR claim first win

This knock was important for my confidence: Rinku

KOLKATA, 19 APRIL

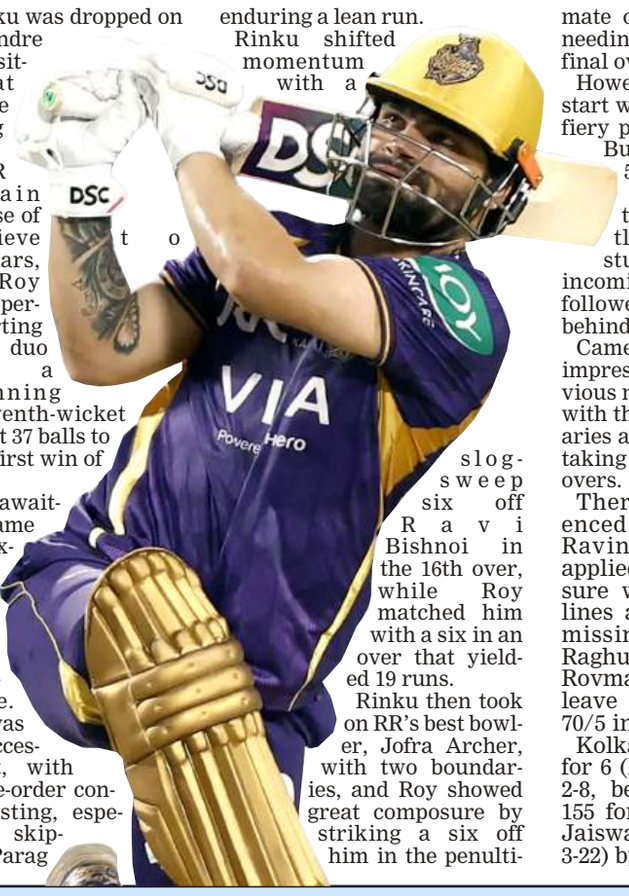
Vice-captain Rinku Singh lived up to expectations with a composed unbeaten 53 as Kolkata Knight Riders survived anxious moments to script their first win of IPL 2026 with a four-wicket victory over Rajasthan Royals, here on Sunday.

Wily Varun Chakravarthy (3/14) returned to his best, showing perfect chemistry with veteran Sunil Narine (2/26) as KKR rediscovered their spin magic at Eden Gardens to restrict RR to an under-par 155/9. Rookie pacer Kartik Tyagi (3/22) also shone at the death with important wickets.

"There was intensity, but no hesitation," said Rinku Singh after delivering a timely, confidence-boosting unbeaten 53 under pressure to fire Kolkata Knight Riders to their first win of the season against Rajasthan Royals in a tense IPL clash here Sunday. Reeling at 85/6 in 13.3 overs, KKR needed 69 runs from the last six overs, with RR's bowlers tightening the screws and Rinku alongside Anukul Roy appearing to be the last recognised pair.

Then came a moment of fortune as Rinku was dropped on eight by Nandre Burger a sitter that proved to be the turning point.

The KKR vice-captain made full use of the reprieve to change gears, while Roy played the perfect supporting role as the duo stitched a match-winning 76-run seventh-wicket stand off just 37 balls to seal KKR's first win of the season.



The much-awaited victory came after a six-match winless run, taking KKR to three points at the halfway stage. For RR, it was a second successive defeat, with their middle-order concerns persisting, especially with skipper Riyan Parag enduring a lean run.

Rinku shifted momentum with a slog-sweep six off Ravi Bishnoi in the 16th over, while Roy matched him with a six in an over that yielded 19 runs.

Rinku then took on RR's best bowler, Jofra Archer, with two boundaries, and Roy showed great composure by striking a six off him in the penultimate over as KKR were left needing just 11 runs in the final over.

However, they had a perfect start while defending 155. The fiery pace duo of Archer and Burger reduced KKR to 5/2 in 1.2 overs.

Archer struck with the very first ball, rattling Tim Seifert's stumps with a sharp incoming delivery. Rahane followed soon after, edging behind to depart for a duck.

Cameron Green, who had impressed with a 79 in the previous match, counter-attacked with three consecutive boundaries and a six to revive KKR, taking them to 31/2 in four overs.

Thereafter, experienced campaigner Ravindra Jadeja applied further pressure with his tight lines and turn, dismissing Angkrish Raghuvanshi (10) and Rovman Powell (23) to leave KKR struggling at 70/5 in 10.1 overs.

Kolkata Knight Riders 161 for 6 (Rinku 53*, 29*, Jadeja 2-8, beat Rajasthan Royals 155 for 9 (Sooryavanshi 46, Jaiswal 39, Varun 3-14, Tyagi 3-22) by four wickets —*PTI*

-PTI

Floundering MI look for answers against confident GT

AHMEDABAD, 19 APRIL

An embattled Mumbai Indians side will be desperate to arrest its slide when it takes on a confident Gujarat Titans outfit, which is eager to extend its winning run, in the Indian Premier League here on Monday.

The two teams enter the fixture having endured contrasting fortunes in recent weeks. The Titans, after opening their campaign with back-to-back defeats, have rediscovered their rhythm with three successive wins, which has placed them sixth on the table. Mumbai, in stark contrast, began with a rare opening-game victory but has since unravelled, suffering four defeats on the bounce, and the margin of their losses has been huge, leaving them languishing at ninth. For the five-time champions, it has been a season where little has clicked. Their campaign has been undermined by a combination of timid powerplay returns, inconsistent middle-order output, and a bowling attack that has lacked penetration. Much of the spotlight has been on Suryakumar Yadav and Tilak Varma, the fulcrum of MI's middle order. While Suryakumar has shown flashes of brilliance, including a half-century, he has struggled for consistency. Tilak, meanwhile, has been woefully out of form, managing just 43 runs in five innings. Skipper Hardik Pandya hasn't fared much better either, with 81 runs from four games, further compounding Mumbai's batting woes.

The problems, however, run deeper than just batting. Mumbai's inability to seize control in the powerplay has left them chasing games too often. The redoubtable Jasprit Bumrah's wicketless run is one of MI's major concerns. The premier fast bowler has been economical and disciplined but remains wicket-less, with opposition batters content to play him out without taking undue risks.

Support from the rest of the attack has been minimal. Shardul Thakur and Deepak Chahar have failed to make decisive breakthroughs, as has Pandya, while the spinners have been erratic with their lengths.The match starts at 7:30 pm —*PTI*

This could be a turning point for SRH, says Steyn after win against CSK

Pace great Dale Steyn on Sunday reckoned the victory over Chennai Super Kings could be a "turning point" for Sunrisers Hyderabad, propelling them into the top four of the IPL standings. SRH are currently in good form, having secured back-to-back wins, including a 10-run victory over CSK at Chepauk on Saturday. Speaking about the win against CSK on Star Sports, Steyn said, "This victory of SRH against CSK shows that they are back to their best after a slow start to the season." Abhishek Sharma and Heinrich Klaasen fired with the bat to guide SRH to 194/9, and the bowlers then responded brilliantly to restrict CSK to 184/8, with Eshan Malinga picking 3/29 in four overs. "At the mid-innings break, I was having a chat with Heinrich Klaasen, and he told me he felt Sunrisers were probably 10 or 15 runs short of where they needed to be. He said a huge bowling effort would be required to secure the win. That is what Sunrisers went out and did," Steyn said.

We made 175 feel like 190, but fell short: Dinesh Karthik

Royal Challengers Bengaluru batting coach Dinesh Karthik praised his side's bowling effort for making a modest 175-run target feel competitive, before David Miller's late onslaught secured a last-over win for Delhi Capitals in their IPL match.DC won the match with a ball to spare here on Saturday. "At no point did we feel that we were a few runs short. We also had some lovely catches, great stops, we made 175 feel like 190, which is all you can do," Karthik was quoted as saying in a press release. RCB posted a decent total on a challenging surface, with Phil Salt (63 off 38) leading the charge through a composed half-century, his second of the season and sixth overall for the franchise.

-PTI

HCL Squash: Suraj Chand storms into men's final

CHENNAI, 19 APRIL

India's Suraj Kumar Chand outplayed Hong Kong's Wailok To to enter the men's final of the HCL Squash PSA Challenger Tour here on Sunday. Second seed Chand won 11-8, 11-7, 11-6 in the men's semifinals played at the Indian Squash Academy here. Chand, ranked 134th in the world, will meet South Korean eighth seed Jeongmin Ryu in what will be the Indian's fifth PSA Tour final. Other results (semifinals): Men: 8-Jeongmin Ryu (Kor) bt 4-Andes Ling (HK) 11-13, 11-9, 11-3, 13-11; Women: 2-Harleein Tan (Mas) bt Salma Othman (Egy) 11-4, 11-9, 10-12, 11-7; 7-Rouqaia Othman (Egy) bt Sehveetrraa Kumar (Mas) 7-11, 11-7, 11-9, 7-11, 11-6.—*PTI*

-PTI

Aditi Ashok carded 69 to move to T-36 in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES, 19 APRIL

India's Aditi Ashok fought back with three birdies on the back nine to move up to tied 36th place with a third-round card of 3-under 69 at the JM Eagle Los Angeles Championship. Aditi birdied the sixth but gave it back on the Par-5 seventh. On the back nine, she birdied the 11th and added two more gains on the 16th and the 18th for a 69, after 70-72 on the first two days. Korea's Sei Young Kim led by two following a roller-coaster round of 71. She had five birdies on the front and ran up an eight-stroke lead with five holes left at El Caballero Country Club. She then bogeyed four times in a row, from the 14th to the 17th. Her late meltdown with four straight bogeys gave two-time event winner Hannah Green and others a foot in the door.—*PTI*

Shafali becomes 5th Indian to play 100 women's T20Is

DURBAN, 19 APRIL

Shafali Verma became the fifth Indian player to feature in 100 women's T20 Internationals after she was named in India's playing XI for the second match against South Africa on Sunday in Durban. The swashbuckling batter joins compatriots Harmanpreet Kaur, Smriti Mandhana, Deepti Sharma, and Jemimah Rodrigues in this milestone.

SA beat India by eight wickets

India suffered their second successive loss to hosts South Africa, going down meekly by eight wickets in the second women's T20I to trail 0-2 in the five-match series here on Sunday. but the visitors failed to stitch together meaningful partnerships and could only post a modest 147. —*PTI*

100 OR MORE WT20IS PLAYED FOR INDIA

Harmanpreet Kaur	192
Smriti Mandhana	162
Deepti Sharma	135
Jemimah Rodrigues	120
Shafali Verma	100

MUNICH OPEN

Ben Shelton defeats Italian Flavio Cobolli to win title

MUNICH, 19 APRIL

Second seed Ben Shelton won the ATP 500 clay-court title in Munich for the first time, beating Italy's Flavio Cobolli 6-2, 7-5 in the final on Sunday.

A year after finishing runner-up to Alexander Zverev, the World No. 6 secured the fifth ATP title of his career and his second of the season after Dallas.

"I came out at a really high level and have done that before against him," Shelton said. "The toughest thing is maintaining it as he raises his level.

Rybakina beats Muchova

Elena Rybakina defeated Karolina Muchova 7-5, 6-1 on Sunday to win the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix for the second time.

It's the first time the 26-year-old 2024 champion has won a repeat title after claiming 12 in different tournaments previously.

The No. 2-ranked Rybakina converted four of her eight break-point opportunities to beat Muchova in 1 hour, 18 minutes. —*PTI*

TOTTENHAM REPORTS RACIST ABUSE OF KEVIN TO POLICE

LONDON, 19 APRIL

Tottenham condemned Sunday what the club described as "vile, dehumanizing racism" aimed at defender Kevin Danso following the 2-2 draw with Brighton in the Premier League. The Austria center back was at fault for Georginio Rutter's stoppage-time equalizer for Brighton that left Tottenham in the relegation zone on Saturday. Tottenham said it has reported racist abuse on social media toward Danso to the police.

"Since yesterday's fixture against Brighton, which took place during the Premier League's No Room For Racism weekend, Kevin Danso has been, and continues to be, subject to significant and abhorrent racist abuse on social media," Tottenham said in a statement. —*PTI*

Asian U20 Athletics C'ships qualification event in Karnataka

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Athletes aiming to earn a ticket to next month's Asian U20 Championships in Hong Kong will have to achieve the AFI qualification standards during the three-day age group competition in Tumkur, Karnataka, from 24 to 26 April.

The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) announced the selection criteria for the upcoming Asian meet on Sunday.

The country's top athletes are expected to compete in the three-day 24th National Junior Athletics Federation Competition in Tumkur.

The Asian U20 Athletics Championships will be held in Hong Kong from May 28 to 31.

Qualification standards for Asian U20 meet: Men:100m: 10.46 secs; 200m: 21.28 secs; 400m: 47.53 secs; 800m: 1:49.73 secs; 1500m: 3:51.76 secs; 3000m: 8:33.00 secs; 5,000m: 14:09.63 secs; 110mh: 13.74 secs; 400mh: 52.00 secs; 3000m steeplechase: 9:36.78 secs; high jump: 2.11m; pole vault: 5.10m; long jump: 7.52m; triple jump: 15.62m; shot put: 19.02m; discus throw: 50.41m; hammer throw: 65.97m; javelin throw: 65.32m; 5,000m race walk: 19:53.57 secs; decathlon: 6274 points; 4x100m relay: 40.01 secs; 4x400m 3:09.48 secs; mixed 4x400m relay 3:28.18 secs. —*PTI*

Hosting FIDE: Chennai eyes bid as India eyes historic opportunity

CHENNAI, 19 APRIL

The All India Chess Federation (AICF) will bid to host the upcoming World Championship matches in India, said Head of Operations A.K. Verma on Sunday, expressing confidence now that two Indians are set to contest reigning champion D. Gukesh in the open section and challenger R. Vaishali in the women's section.

"Of course, we will try to bring it to India. We will be doing the bidding. We are very happy and proud that two Indians, in both categories, are going to fight for the World Championships. Chess is booming in India, and we are lucky that both Gukesh and Vaishali will be playing.

Ghosh becomes India's 95th Grandmaster

The week has offered back-to-back reasons for celebration in the chess fraternity. R. Vaishali secured qualification for the FIDE Women's World Championship, A. S. Sharvaanica won the FIDE Under-12 Rapid title, and on Sunday, there was another milestone as Aronyak Ghosh became India's 95th Grandmaster, achieving his final norm at the Bangkok Chess Club Open 2026. The Kolkata native scored 7.0 out of 9 to finish tied for first place. —*PTI*

Ajit Agarkar's contract renewed till next year

NEW DELHI, 19 APRIL

Ajit Agarkar will continue as chairman of the senior selection committee after the BCCI decided to renew his contract for one more year, keeping an eye on the 2027 ODI World Cup.

Under Agarkar's chairmanship, the selected Indian teams between October 2023 and March 2026 reached four ICC tournament finals, winning three of them: two T20 World Cups and one ICC Champions Trophy, and it was a foregone conclusion that his contract would be renewed for a fourth year.

"Agarkar didn't seek extension. A selector can continue up to four years in either junior or senior selection committee and five years cumulatively across both committees. Hence, Ajit's contract is being renewed and not extended," a senior BCCI source told PTI.

Sources close to Agarkar always maintained that he preferred to let the decision-makers assess his panel's performance rather than seek a renewal himself.

Continuity ahead of the 50-over World Cup is one of the key factors behind the board's decision. —*PTI*

PREMIER LEAGUE

Cunha fires Red Devils to 1–0 win over Blues

MANCHESTER, 19 APRIL

Tottenham remains rooted inside the relegation zone. Chelsea is stuck outside the Champions League spots.

It was a disappointing Saturday night for the two London giants in the Premier League, starting with Tottenham conceding an equalizer deep into stoppage time to draw 2-2 with Brighton.

That kept Spurs, ever-presents in England's top flight since 1978, in third-to-last place and in grave danger of relegation with five games left. Matheus Cunha fires Red Devils To 1–0 Win Over Blues. While United strengthened its grip on third place, Chelsea stayed in sixth and is looking increasingly unlikely to get back into Europe's top competition next season. That would be a huge financial blow to Chelsea's American ownership, which has spent heavily to build an underperforming playing squad.

Tottenham is still without a win in the Premier League in 2026 — a stretch of 15 matches. That's a remarkable run for one of the country's so-called "Big Six," which played in the Champions League this season as the reigning Europa League winner. Yet Tottenham manager Roberto De Zerbi still believes his team is capable of winning all of its remaining games and staying up.

"Now it's difficult to hear my words," he said, "but if you watch the players and analyze the level of the players, I think we can win five games in a row.

"Not to be arrogant because I am not arrogant, especially now, but we have the quality enough to fight and win games in a row." —*PTI*